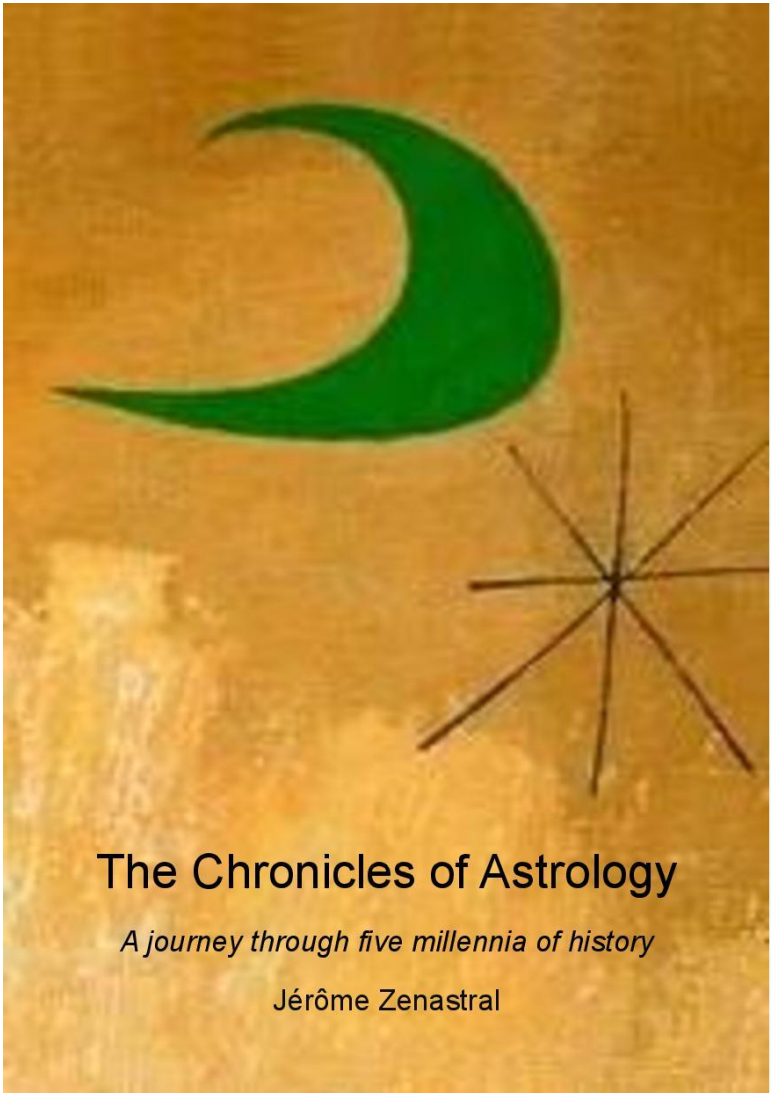

The Chronicles of Astrology

A journey through five millennia of history

Jérôme Zenastral

The Work of Jérôme Zenastral

For nearly fifty years, Jérôme Zenastral has been developing the astrology of mindfulness, an approach that regards the birth chart as a symbolic mirror of the psyche within the context of a synchronicity between the heavens and human experience.

His works form a coherent body of writing, in which each book explores a particular aspect in depth whilst contributing to a single overarching vision.

By choosing to self-publish, Jérôme Zenastral is able to develop this body of work freely as his research progresses. The books are regularly expanded and updated to reflect the evolution of this approach whilst maintaining its overall coherence.

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Foreword

When we say the word ‘astrology’ today, everyone conjures up a different image. Some immediately think of newspaper horoscopes, others of the signs of the zodiac, the planets or astrological charts. Still others see it as an ancient tradition, a symbolic language, a spiritual practice or a subject of controversy. Few disciplines have sparked as much fascination, debate, criticism and transformation throughout their history.

And yet, behind all these perceptions lies an extraordinary human journey.

Astrology did not originate with the Greeks, nor even with the earliest recorded civilisations. Its roots lie in a much more ancient past, when the first human beings looked up at the night sky. Long before the invention of writing, they were already observing the return of the seasons, the phases of the Moon and the slow movement of the stars. Little by little, they discovered that the sky possessed an order, rhythms and regularities. From this contemplation arose a question that would never cease to accompany humanity: is there a connection between the cosmos and our existence?

The answers to this question have varied greatly over the ages. Mesopotamian priests saw in it omens intended for rulers. Greek philosophers developed the first natal charts. Astronomers in the Arab world perfected celestial calculations. Medieval thinkers debated human free will in the face of astral influences. The Renaissance revolutionised our understanding of the cosmos. In the modern centuries, the ‘ ’ introduced psychology, the philosophy of consciousness and the new demands of

scientific thought. At every stage, astrology was transformed because humanity itself was changing the way it understood the world.

It is this history that the following pages recount.

These chronicles are neither a technical treatise, nor a defence of astrology, nor a critique of it. They offer a journey. A journey through more than five thousand years of history, discoveries, debates, encounters and intellectual revolutions. They invite the reader to follow, step by step, the evolution of a tradition that has never ceased to reinvent itself.

The aim of this book is also to show that the history of astrology is inextricably linked to that of science, philosophy, psychology, religion, art and civilisations. Great astronomers were often astrologers. Philosophers debated its foundations. Theologians questioned its compatibility with human freedom. Psychologists rediscovered the power of its symbols. Advances in astronomy continually transformed the way the heavens were represented. Astrology has never evolved in isolation; it has always engaged in dialogue with the great ideas of its time.

Throughout these chronicles, the reader will also discover that the most important questions have never really changed. Who are we? Are we free? Does fate exist? Why do symbols still speak to us? What does it really mean to gaze at the sky? These questions cut across all civilisations. The answers evolve, but the questions remain.

History also reveals another, often overlooked reality. Astrology is not a static entity handed down intact from antiquity. It is a living tradition. Techniques have evolved,

cosmological models have succeeded one another, and interpretations have been revised, sometimes abandoned, and often renewed. Understanding astrology therefore requires an understanding of its history. It is only by observing its evolution that we can grasp why the same symbols have been given different meanings over the centuries.

This historical perspective also calls for humility. Every era believed it possessed a definitive understanding of the world before being overtaken by new discoveries. Scientific, philosophical and psychological revolutions remind us that all knowledge remains open to further exploration. This lesson applies to astrology as well.

These columns are, ultimately, the expression of a conviction born of several decades of research. The history of astrology does not necessarily lead to a dichotomy between tradition and modernity, between science and symbolism, or between reason and spirituality. Rather, it invites us to clarify the different levels of understanding of reality. The sciences describe the mechanisms of the physical universe with remarkable precision. Symbolic language explores another dimension of human experience. Confusing these two realms often leads to misunderstandings; distinguishing between them, on the other hand, allows for a more fruitful dialogue.

It is in this spirit that mindfulness astrology was born. It does not seek to restore ancient conceptions nor to oppose contemporary scientific knowledge . It offers a reinterpretation of the birth chart based on the synchronicity between the heavens and the psyche, on the absence of causal influence from the stars, and on the recognition of Consciousness as the fundamental reality.

This approach is not the starting point of this book; it is its natural culmination. The reader is thus invited to first explore the entire history of astrology before discovering how this long evolution now opens up the possibility of a renewed understanding of its symbolic language.

I hope that these chronicles will enable the reader to view this tradition, stretching back several millennia, in a different light. Not as a relic of the past, nor as a truth to be accepted or rejected, but as one of humanity's most fascinating intellectual adventures. For, ultimately, the history of astrology tells us less about the stars than about the men and women who, for millennia, have sought in the sky a mirror of their deepest questions.

If this book inspires you to look up at the stars with greater curiosity, wonder and discernment, then it will have fully achieved its aim.

Introduction

Few disciplines have a history as long, as rich and as eventful as astrology.

For over five thousand years, it has accompanied humanity's great civilisations. It originated in the plains of Mesopotamia, developed in Egypt, took shape in the Greek world, was enriched by Arab scholars, taught in medieval universities, discussed by philosophers, practised by physicians, reinterpreted during the Renaissance, challenged by the scientific revolutions, revitalised by modern psychology, and continues to evolve even today in the light of contemporary discoveries.

This history is far from linear.

It is made up of periods of growth and decline, of passionate debates, of questioning, of being forgotten, of rediscovery and of rebirth. Some ideas have survived the centuries almost intact; others have undergone a profound shift in meaning. Humankind has altered its understanding of the heavens, the Earth, the Universe, matter, the psyche and consciousness. With each of these transformations, astrology has been called upon to reinterpret its own language.

It is precisely this journey that this book offers.

Rather than an academic history presented in the form of a treatise, you will find here a series of chronicles. Each recounts an episode, an encounter, a discovery, a civilisation, a figure or an idea that has helped shape the evolution of astrology. Each chronicle can be read independently, but they all link together to form a sweeping narrative spanning more than five millennia of history.

This choice is no accident.
The history of astrology resembles less a straight line than a vast fresco in which astronomers, philosophers, priests, mathematicians, doctors, emperors, theologians, psychologists and researchers all intersect. A chronological approach allows us to naturally follow the successive transformations of this discipline and to understand how each era made its own contribution.
You will thus encounter the earliest stargazers, the Mesopotamian scribes, the scholars of the Library of Alexandria, the great Greek astrologers, the astronomers of the Arab world, medieval thinkers, Renaissance humanists, the pioneers of modern astronomy, the founders of psychological astrology and contemporary researchers. You will also discover how astronomical discoveries, philosophical developments and scientific advances have constantly influenced the way the heavens are interpreted.
But this book does not merely recount the history of astrology.
It also tells the story of how we view the world.
Over the centuries, humankind has continually revised its understanding of the Universe. People once believed that eclipses were divine warnings, then came to see them as perfectly explainable astronomical phenomena. They imagined celestial spheres before discovering galaxies. They believed that the planets revolved around the Earth before realising that our Sun is itself just one star amongst hundreds of billions of others. Each scientific revolution has transformed our conception of the cosmos, but also our way of interpreting humanity’s place within it.
This evolution has a direct bearing on astrology.

For a long time, astrological explanations were often associated with the idea that the stars exerted an influence on human beings. Advances in astronomy and the natural sciences have gradually led to this view being called into question. Consequently, a new question has arisen: if the stars do not determine our existence, how are we to understand the enduring nature of astrological language across the centuries?

This question runs quietly through all the following articles.

It does not receive an immediate answer. On the contrary, the reader is invited to observe how different civilisations have responded to it according to their knowledge, beliefs and philosophical conceptions. This progression helps us to understand that the history of astrology is also the history of the great questions that humanity asks itself about freedom, destiny, time, the psyche, consciousness and the meaning of existence.

As the pages turn, another truth gradually emerges: astrological symbols have often outlived the theories that explained them. Cosmological models have changed, and astronomical knowledge has evolved, but the great symbolic figures of the zodiac, the planets and the celestial cycles have continued to shape hum e thought. This remarkable enduring nature deserves to be examined rigorously, without either favourable or unfavourable bias. This is why this book adopts an essentially historical approach.

It asks the reader neither to subscribe to a doctrine nor to reject a tradition. It invites the reader to observe. To observe how ideas arise, evolve, transform and sometimes disappear. To observe how scientific discoveries alter

symbolic interpretations. To observe how the same celestial bodies can be given different meanings depending on the era. Finally, to observe how a tradition dating back several millennia remains capable of renewing itself without entirely losing its identity.

This historical approach naturally sets the scene for the book's final chapters.

Having journeyed through five thousand years of history, the reader will discover that a new understanding of astrology is now possible. No longer as a theory of celestial influences, but as a symbolic language emerging in synchrony with human experience. This perspective, developed within the framework of mindfulness astrology, does not represent a break with the history recounted in this book; rather, it represents one of its most recent developments, informed by discoveries in astronomy, contributions from psychology, the demands of critical thinking, and an in-depth reflection on the nature of consciousness.

It is now time to embark on this journey.

To understand astrology, it is not enough simply to study the planets, the signs or astrological charts. First, we must reconnect with the men and women who, for millennia, have looked up at the sky with the same curiosity, the same sense of wonder and the same fundamental questions. For before it was a discipline, astrology was first and foremost a human adventure. And it is this adventure that we are now going to embark upon together.

Season 1: The Origins of Astrology

Episode 1 Before astrology: the first night humanity looked up at the sky

When we say the word ‘astrology’ today, we automatically think of the signs of the zodiac, the planets, horoscopes or birth charts. Yet this extraordinary human adventure began long before the invention of writing, long before the first civilisations and even long before the first astrologers appeared.

To trace astrology back to its origins, we must first set aside everything we know about it. For before interpreting the sky, humanity had to learn to look at it.

Imagine a night twenty thousand, thirty thousand or perhaps fifty thousand years ago. The Sun has just disappeared behind the horizon. There are no towns, no lit roads, no artificial light. It is pitch black. Gradually, the sky lights up with thousands of stars. The Milky Way stretches across the sky like a vast river of light. The Moon illuminates the landscape, whilst a few particularly bright celestial bodies seem to move slowly amongst the fixed stars.

Even today, there are few places on Earth where one can gaze upon such a spectacular sky. For our ancestors, this sight was the everyday landscape of every night.

Very soon, a question probably arose: why does the sky change without ever becoming chaotic?

Every evening, certain stars reappear in exactly the same place. Others, by contrast, seem to move slowly over the course of weeks. The Moon constantly changes its appearance before returning to its original shape. The

seasons return with astonishing regularity. The days grow longer and then shorter according to an unchanging rhythm.

These phenomena could not have failed to strike the first humans. Long before they built cities, they were already observing nature with extraordinary precision. Their survival depended on their ability to recognise animal migrations, flowering seasons, changes in the climate and the rhythms of the tides. The sky was naturally part of this vast book of nature that they had to learn to read.

Observation gradually became a form of memory. Generation after generation, this knowledge was passed down orally. The elders taught the younger ones which stars heralded the return of spring, which positions of the Moon accompanied certain natural phenomena, and which celestial landmarks could be used for navigation during night-time journeys.

This painstaking accumulation of observations is probably one of humanity's oldest scientific endeavours. Archaeologists regularly uncover evidence suggesting that certain prehistoric peoples already attached great importance to celestial cycles. Engravings, stone alignments and several megalithic sites appear to have been constructed with the sunrises and sunsets at the solstices or equinoxes in mind. Whilst not all interpretations are universally accepted amongst researchers, one thing now seems certain: the sky already played a vital role in the lives of prehistoric societies.

At that time, neither astronomy nor astrology existed in the sense that we understand them today. These two disciplines were still inseparable. Observing the sky, measuring time, identifying the seasons and seeking to

understand humanity's place in the universe were all part of a single, unified endeavour.
It was not until several millennia later that astronomy and astrology went their separate ways.
It is also important to remember that the earliest observers did not know the planets as we know them today. They simply saw a few 'wandering stars' moving amongst the other stars. This unusual behaviour naturally caught their attention. Much later, these moving celestial bodies would become the key elements of astrology.
The history of astrology did not, therefore, arise from a belief. It arose from a sense of wonder. Before any interpretation, before any theory, there was first and foremost contemplation. Men and women looked up at the sky, night after night, for thousands of years. They observed, compared, memorised and passed on their discoveries. Without realising it, they were laying the foundations for an intellectual adventure that would span all the great civilisations.
Astrology did not appear out of the blue. It is the culmination of a very long history of curiosity, patience and observation.
In this series, we will gradually trace the course of this history, from the earliest observations of the sky to the various conceptions of astrology that have emerged over the centuries. We will meet priests, philosophers, astronomers, emperors, scholars, discoverers of planets and many other figures who have each, in their own way, helped to shape this fascinating discipline.
The journey has only just begun.

In the next episode, we'll discover how early civilisations managed to measure time using the Sun, the Moon and the stars, giving rise to the first calendars in human history.

Episode 2: The First Calendars: When Humanity Learnt to Measure Time

In our previous episode, we saw that early humans spent millennia observing the sky even before astrology emerged. This observation was not merely a source of wonder; it also served an essential purpose: to understand the rhythm of time.

Today, we simply need to look at a watch or a calendar to know the date and time. But for the vast majority of human history, neither of these tools existed. The sky was the only 'clock' available to people.

Very early on, they noticed that certain phenomena recurred with remarkable regularity. The Sun rose every morning and set every evening. The days grew longer after winter, then shorter after summer. The Moon slowly changed shape before returning to its original appearance. Certain stars disappeared for several months before reappearing at the same time of year.

These recurring patterns served as reliable markers. For hunter-gatherers, knowing that a particular season was approaching could mean the difference between abundance and scarcity. Animal migrations, the ripening of wild fruit, fishing seasons and the movements of herds were often linked to natural cycles. Observing the sky was therefore, in a sense, a way of anticipating the future.

The Moon was probably humanity's first calendar. Its cycle is easy to follow. Over the course of about thirty

days, it gradually moves from the new Moon to the first quarter, becomes full, then wanes before disappearing once more. This rhythm is regular enough to allow time to be counted, even without any scientific knowledge.

It is, moreover, no coincidence that many languages still associate the words ‘month’ and ‘moon’ today. Both derive from the same reality observed since prehistoric times. But the earliest observers soon discovered a problem. Twelve lunar cycles amount to approximately 354 days, whereas a full cycle of the seasons takes around 365 days. This discrepancy of eleven days a year eventually became apparent. After just a few years, the seasons no longer corresponded to the same phases of the Moon.

This discovery gradually forced early societies to refine their methods of observation. The Sun then provided a second point of reference. By tracking the precise point where it rose or set on the horizon, it became possible to identify the two solstices and the two equinoxes. These four specific moments marked the major stages of the year and enabled the organisation of agricultural activities, seasonal migrations or certain communal ceremonies.

Long before observatories existed, the earliest calendars were therefore inscribed in the landscape itself. A mountain, a rock, a natural opening or an alignment of stones could serve as landmarks for observing the sunrise on a specific date.

Over the centuries, these observations became more precise. Knowledge no longer depended solely on an individual’s memory, but became a heritage passed down from one generation to the next. Each people gradually enriched this vast collective experience.

Archaeologists have uncovered, in several regions of the world, objects dating back tens of thousands of years that feature series of engraved notches. Some researchers have suggested that these may have been counting systems linked to the phases of the moon. This hypothesis remains a matter of debate, but it bears witness to a fundamental idea: very early on, human beings sought to represent time in a concrete way.

Measuring time profoundly transformed human societies. Once it became possible to anticipate the seasons, it also became possible to organise harvests more effectively, prepare stores, arrange communal gatherings or celebrate certain events on a regular basis. Calendars thus helped to structure social life long before the advent of writing.

This gradual mastery of celestial cycles ushered in a new era in human history. The sky was no longer merely observed; it became a tool for organising the world.

Millennia later, when the earliest civilisations of Mesopotamia established their official calendars, they drew upon this vast legacy of observations accumulated by generations of anonymous people.

The history of astrology therefore begins long before the first horoscopes. It has its roots in the gradual realisation that the sky has its own rhythms, and that these rhythms can help human beings to better understand the passage of time.

In the next episode, we shall look up at the celestial body that probably fascinated our ancestors more than any other: the Moon. Why did its phases exert such an influence on early societies? And how did it become humanity’s first great clock?

Episode 3: The Moon: humanity's first clock

For hundreds of thousands of years, the Moon has been a constant companion in humanity's nights. Long before people built observatories, inscribed calendars or named the planets, it was already dominating the night sky with its brilliance and ever-changing phases.

Unlike the stars, which seem unchanged from one night to the next, the Moon is constantly changing. One evening, it appears as a slender crescent. A few days later, it becomes a half-disc, then a full, luminous sphere, before gradually waning until it disappears completely. Then the cycle begins again.

This spectacle, visible to the naked eye by all peoples of the Earth, could not go unnoticed. Very early on, the first observers realised that these transformations were neither random nor capricious. They recurred with a remarkably regular rhythm. Each lunar cycle lasted just over twenty-nine and a half days. Without knowing this figure precisely, prehistoric societies discovered that it was possible to measure time using the phases of the Moon.

This discovery was nothing short of a revolution. For the first time, time had become measurable. It was no longer simply a matter of waiting for the seasons to return or observing changes in the weather. From then on, even the nights themselves could be organised according to a predictable rhythm. The lunar cycles provided a common reference point for an entire community, facilitating the organisation of journeys, gatherings, trade and, probably, numerous ceremonies.

The Moon had another advantage: anyone could observe its changes without any instruments. Whereas the

movements of the planets required careful observation, the lunar phases were naturally evident ly to the eye. They thus became a universal language shared by all generations.

It is likely that the earliest attempts at counting were directly inspired by these cycles. Several prehistoric objects feature series of notches carved into bone, stone or ivory. Perhaps the most famous is the Ishango bone, discovered in Central Africa, whose carvings still intrigue researchers. Other objects, such as certain counting sticks found in Europe, have also been interpreted by some specialists as possible lunar calendars. These hypotheses remain a matter of debate, but they demonstrate just how far back the question of measuring time stretches in our history.

The Moon also influenced daily life in very practical ways. On nights when the Moon was full, travel became easier thanks to its brightness. Hunters were able to extend their hunting trips, whilst certain animal species altered their behaviour in response to the night-time light. The tides, particularly visible along coastlines, also followed a rhythm linked to the lunar phases, even though their true origin would not be understood until many millennia later.

Gradually, the Moon ceased to be merely a natural phenomenon. It became a point of reference, then a symbol. Almost all civilisations accorded it a special place. Sometimes a female deity, sometimes a male god depending on the culture, it was associated with fertility, the cycles of life, birth, death, renewal and the perpetual return of all things. Its regular disappearance and reappearance naturally fuelled the most ancient mythological tales.

This significance is still reflected in our language. The words for ‘month’ and ‘moon’ often share a common origin in many ancient languages. The earliest calendars were almost always lunar or lunisolar, before certain civilisations gradually began to favour the Sun as the basis for organising the year.

But the Moon was not alone in the sky. As observers became more attentive, they noticed that a few particular stars also seemed to move slowly amongst the others. They did not twinkle quite in the same way and gradually changed position over the course of weeks. These mysterious ‘wandering stars’ would soon captivate their attention.

These celestial bodies would later be named planets. Their motion, much slower and more complex than that of the Moon, would mark a new phase in the observation of the sky. It was in seeking to understand their movements that the first star charts gradually emerged, followed by the first interpretations of the language of the stars.

Before that, however, people still had to learn to recognise the great patterns formed by the stars. For whilst the planets moved, the stars seemed to form an unchanging backdrop. Very early on, the human imagination linked these points of light together to see animals, heroes, objects or deities. The first constellations were coming into being.

It is this new adventure that we shall explore in the next episode.

Episode 4 The first constellations: when humanity linked the stars

Having learnt to observe the cycles of the Sun and the Moon, early humans turned their attention to another fascinating spectacle: the countless stars that seemed motionless above their heads.

Every night, when the sky was clear, thousands of points of light would appear. Unlike the Moon or the planets, they seemed to maintain the same arrangement tirelessly. Year after year, the same groups of stars returned to the same place in the sky, as if they were drawing a vast celestial map.

Faced with this profusion of stars, a problem soon became apparent: how could they distinguish between the different sections of the sky? How could they memorise their positions? How could they pass this knowledge on to future generations?

The human mind came up with a remarkable solution.

It began to mentally link certain stars together to form easily recognisable shapes. Here, an animal appeared. There, a hunter took shape. Further on, a bird, a fish, a snake or a legendary figure. These shapes obviously did not exist in the sky itself. They were created by the human imagination in order to transform a complex cluster of stars into a familiar landscape.

This is how the first constellations came into being. We do not know which were the very first patterns imagined by hunter-gatherers. No records have survived to bear witness to this. However, one thing is certain: all great civilisations developed their own constellations. This universal

phenomenon shows that the need to organise the sky stemmed from a profoundly human inclination.

Constellations served several purposes. Firstly, they aided navigation. Before the invention of the compass, the sky provided a remarkable guide for night-time travel. Certain stars helped people find north, whilst others signalled the return of a particular season.

They also served as a calendar. The appearance of certain constellations on the horizon, just before sunrise or shortly after sunset, often signalled a change of season. People gradually learnt to associate these appearances with animal migrations, harvests, river floods or favourable times to undertake certain activities.

But the constellations also had a cultural dimension.

Very quickly, they became the backdrop for stories passed down from generation to generation. Each people populated the sky with their own heroes, sacred animals, ancestors or deities. The sky became a vast collective memory where stories could be retold every night.

It is remarkable to note that the same group of stars was often interpreted very differently across cultures. Where the Greeks would later see a hunter, other peoples would recognise a stag, a tortoise, a canoe, a spirit or a tree. The stars remained identical, but the way they were viewed varied from one civilisation to another.

This diversity teaches us one essential thing: constellations are cultural constructs. They are not physical objects present in space. They represent a human way of organising the sky to make it easier to understand and remember. They bear witness to our species' extraordinary ability to make sense of the shapes it perceives.

Modern astronomers have preserved this legacy. Even today, the sky is officially divided into eighty-eight constellations recognised by the International Astronomical Union. Many bear names inherited from the Greek tradition, but other cultures still have their own maps of the sky, which are sometimes very different.

This stage is fundamental to the history of astrology.

Before tracking the movements of the planets, it was necessary to have a stable backdrop against which to observe their movements. The constellations provided this backdrop. They offered early observers a common language for locating the stars and comparing their positions over time.

The sky gradually ceased to be a multitude of scattered stars. It became an organised landscape. This organisation unwittingly paved the way for a major discovery: some celestial bodies did not conform to this apparent stillness. Night after night, they glided slowly past the constellations, as if following a particular path across the sky.

These mysterious ‘wandering stars’ would soon capture the full attention of the earliest observers.

In the next episode, we shall set out to explore them and discover how the planets were distinguished from the fixed stars, paving the way for the first observations that would lead, several millennia later, to the birth of astrology.

Episode 5: Wandering Stars: The Discovery of the First Planets

For millennia, human beings observed a sky that seemed to obey an unchanging order. The constellations returned faithfully with the changing seasons, tracing the same celestial landscape year after year. They formed a reassuring, almost eternal backdrop.

Yet certain celestial bodies refused to conform to this apparent stability. Through their persistent observation of the sky, the earliest prehistoric astronomers noticed that a small number of luminous objects were slowly changing position. Unlike the stars, they never remained in exactly the same place. Week after week, month after month, they seemed to glide amongst the constellations.

This discovery was probably one of the most significant in the entire history of sky observation.

Today, we know that these are the planets visible to the naked eye: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. But the earliest observers were, of course, unaware of their true nature. To them, these celestial bodies were, above all, mysterious lights that behaved differently from the other stars.

Their movement was slow, but noticeable enough to anyone who observed the sky regularly. From one season to the next, they were no longer in the same position. They seemed to be travelling.

It is, in fact, from this characteristic that their name derives.

The word ‘planet’ comes from the Greek *planêtês*, meaning ‘wanderer’ or ‘traveller’. The Greeks were simply echoing a much older observation: certain celestial

bodies seemed to traverse the sky whilst the stars remained fixed.

Among them, Venus attracted particular attention.

Extremely bright, it would sometimes appear before sunrise and sometimes after sunset. For a long time, many civilisations even believed that these were two different celestial bodies: one heralding the morning, the other accompanying the evening. It was only later that it was realised that they were one and the same planet.

Mars had another distinctive feature. Its reddish colour set it apart immediately from the other celestial bodies. Its brightness varied over the years, sometimes becoming particularly intense. This unusual hue made a deep impression on ancient peoples, who often associated it with war, fire or power.

Jupiter and Saturn, moving much more slowly, seemed to make a slow procession through the constellations. It took years of observation to fully perceive their movement. This slowness undoubtedly contributed to their being accorded special significance in many traditions.

As for Mercury, its proximity to the Sun made it more difficult to observe. It appeared only briefly at dawn or dusk, as if it never truly strayed from the Sun.

For early observers, these five planets formed a category of their own. They were neither ordinary stars, nor the Moon, nor the Sun. They constituted a group of celestial bodies with peculiar behaviour, whose movements seemed to obey as yet unknown rules.

Observing these movements required considerable patience. Unlike the phases of the Moon, which are visible over the course of a few days, the planets sometimes required several years of observation before their

trajectories became apparent. Knowledge could therefore only be passed on within communities where several generations continued the same observational work.

Gradually, the earliest astronomers realised that these movements were not random. The planets all followed the same path across the sky, passing successively in front of certain specific constellations. They seemed to be following an invisible route.

This discovery was to transform the observation of the sky. For if the planets always followed the same path, it became possible to predict their future positions, to compare them and to compile increasingly accurate records.

This celestial path would later be given a famous name: the zodiac. Before becoming the framework for astrology, the zodiac was first and foremost an astronomical reality, a band across the sky along which the Sun, the Moon and the planets appear to move when viewed from Earth.

Understanding this path would require many more centuries of observation. It would gradually emerge within the great civilisations of the Near East, where generations of priests and scholars devoted their lives to the methodical study of the sky.

We are now approaching the very beginnings of astronomy and astrology.

In the next episode, we will set out to discover this celestial path that still fascinates us today: the zodiac. We shall see that, before it came to consist of twelve signs, it was initially simply a section of the sky across which the wandering stars appeared to travel.

Episode 6 The Zodiac: the celestial path of the wandering stars

In our previous episode, we discovered that some celestial bodies behaved differently from the stars. Whilst the constellations appeared motionless, these mysterious ‘wandering stars’ slowly traversed the sky along a path that always seemed to be the same.

But how did the earliest observers manage to recognise this invisible path?

To answer this question, we must imagine several generations of men and women tirelessly observing the sky. Night after night, year after year, they mentally noted the position of the planets in relation to the constellations. Gradually, a realisation dawned: the planets never pass through just any region of the sky.

They all seem to follow the same celestial path. Today, we know why. The planets of the Solar System orbit the Sun in planes that are very close to one another. Seen from Earth, they therefore appear to move within a narrow region of the sky that astronomers call the ecliptic. It is also within this band that the Sun appears to complete its annual path and that the Moon follows the greater part of its course.

Naturally, ancient peoples were unaware of this explanation. Nevertheless, they observed the phenomenon with remarkable precision. The wandering stars seemed to follow a veritable celestial path, as if an immense invisible path had been traced amongst the stars.

This discovery greatly simplified observations. Rather than monitoring the entire celestial sphere, it was now sufficient to focus one’s attention on this particular band.

Subsequent generations were then able to compare the positions of the planets more easily, record their movements and begin to recognise certain patterns.
The zodiac gradually emerged from these observations.
Contrary to a widely held belief, it was not created all at once. It is the result of several centuries, probably several millennia, of patient observations carried out by different civilisations.
Originally, it did not yet consist of the twelve signs we know today. The earliest observers simply distinguished groups of stars that served as landmarks along this celestial path. Some constellations were easier to recognise than others. They naturally became reference points for tracking the movements of the planets.
Over time, these landmarks grew in importance. The constellations were given names, often inspired by animals, mythological figures or familiar objects. Each civilisation developed its own traditions. Some figures disappeared, others were transformed, whilst still others survived the centuries to reach our cultural heritage almost intact.
The zodiac was therefore, first and foremost, a map of the sky. It enabled the planets to be located with greater precision. It facilitated observations, comparisons and the passing on of knowledge. Long before it became a symbolic language, it was a remarkable astronomical tool.
This precision would soon lead to a decisive discovery. By observing the planets over long periods, the earliest astronomers noticed that some returned regularly to neighbouring positions. Cycles gradually began to emerge. The heavens revealed a regularity even deeper than had been imagined.

It was precisely this consistency in celestial movements that would convince several great civilisations that there was an order to the universe. This order was fascinating.
If the stars always returned according to precise rhythms, could their future positions be predicted? And if these movements obeyed certain laws, did they hold any particular significance for human societies?
These questions gradually ushered in a new phase of history.
In the Near East, in the fertile plains between the Tigris and the Euphrates, cities began to develop . The first forms of writing appeared, temples were built, priests compiled increasingly precise observations, and the first systematic records of the sky were made.
For the first time, knowledge would no longer rely solely on the memory of the elders. It was to be inscribed on clay. With this invention, the observation of the sky entered a new era. What had until then been part of the oral tradition could now be preserved, compared and expanded upon over the centuries. It was against this exceptional backdrop that the first great astronomical and astrological traditions in history emerged.
Our next stop will take us to Mesopotamia, where the first cities, the first writing systems and the first major observatories were to profoundly transform the way humanity viewed the sky.

Episode 7: When the Sky Became Meaningful

Since the start of this series, we have followed humanity’s first steps in discovering the sky. The men and women of prehistory learnt to recognise the stars, to observe the

cycles of the Moon, to track the seasons, and then to distinguish the mysterious wandering stars that we now call planets.

But one question remains. At what point did human beings stop looking at the sky merely to find their way or measure time? At what point did they begin to attribute meaning to it?

It is impossible to give a precise answer. Prehistoric peoples left us neither texts nor accounts, nor explanations of their beliefs. Archaeologists have at their disposal mainly artefacts, cave paintings, sculptures and monuments, the interpretation of which often remains difficult. We must therefore proceed with caution.

One thing, however, seems likely. Early humans lived in a world where nature played a central role. Storms, eclipses, comets, meteors, the seasons, births and deaths were all part of the same mysterious universe, the rhythms of which they sought to understand.

The sky could not be separated from the rest of nature. When a drought struck, when a herd returned at the same time each year, or when an eclipse suddenly obscured the Sun, these phenomena were experienced as belonging to the same world order. Human beings naturally sought to establish links between the events around them.

Our brains work in this way. They look for patterns, compare situations, make associations and try to make sense of what they observe. This ability has contributed greatly to the survival of our species. Recognising that one phenomenon regularly precedes another often enables us to anticipate dangers or make better use of nature’s resources.

This tendency to seek connections was also evident in the observation of the sky. If certain stars heralded the return of spring, if the phases of the Moon coincided with certain natural rhythms, or if the rising of a constellation regularly preceded a hunting season, it became natural to consider that the sky played a part, in one way or another, in the organisation of the world.

We do not know how these early associations were understood. Were they perceived as signs sent by deities? As manifestations of invisible powers? As the expression of a cosmic order? Or simply as useful points of reference for everyday life?

All these hypotheses remain open to debate. What seems clearer, however, is that the first great civilisations would gradually come to attribute a sacred dimension to the heavens.

In Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, India and Central America, the movements of the stars were observed with extraordinary precision. Priests, scribes and scholars devoted their lives to recording their movements. These observations were carefully recorded, compared and passed on.

The sky would then become much more than a clock.

It would be regarded as a vast book that one must learn to read.

It is important, however, not to project our modern concepts onto these ancient times. Astrology as we know it today did not yet exist. The signs of the zodiac, astrological houses, birth charts and horoscopes would not appear until much later. The earliest observations stemmed above all from a desire to understand the rhythms of the world and to organise the lives of societies.

This evolution reminds us of a reality that is often forgotten.
Before becoming a symbolic language, the sky was an object of observation. Before giving rise to interpretations, it gave birth to calendars. Before inspiring astrologers, it shaped generations of patient observers who devoted their lives to contemplating the movements of the stars.
The history of astrology is therefore also the history of human curiosity. A curiosity which, little by little, led the earliest civilisations to develop a remarkably precise understanding of the heavens.
It is to one of these civilisations that we shall turn in the next episode. We shall leave prehistory behind and head for the fertile plains between the Tigris and the Euphrates. There, more than five thousand years ago, the first cities, writing and monumental temples emerged… along with the first great observers of the sky, whose work would leave a lasting mark on the history of astronomy and astrology.

Episode 8 Göbekli Tepe: the oldest sanctuary facing the sky?

On top of a hill in south-eastern Turkey lies an archaeological site that has profoundly changed our understanding of prehistory. Its name is now known throughout the world: Göbekli Tepe.
When the first excavations began in the 1990s, archaeologists did not expect such a discovery. Buried under several metres of earth were immense T-shaped stone pillars, richly decorated with wild animals: foxes,

snakes, scorpions, wild boars, vultures, gazelles, aurochs and many more.
The most surprising thing, however, was not their beauty.
Dating revealed that this sanctuary had been built around 11,500 years ago – several millennia before the pyramids of Egypt, before Stonehenge and before the first major cities of Mesopotamia.
At that time, agriculture was still in its infancy. People lived mainly by hunting and gathering. For a long time, historians believed that only societies that were already settled could erect monuments on such a scale. Göbekli Tepe thoroughly challenged this notion.
Dozens of monumental pillars, some weighing several tonnes, were quarried, transported and erected with remarkable technical skill. Their arrangement in circular enclosures bears witness to a particularly sophisticated form of collective organisation.
Why was such a monument built?
It is one of the great mysteries of contemporary archaeology. Several researchers see it as a vast sanctuary where different communities gathered to hold ceremonies, strengthen their social bonds or share common beliefs. Others place greater emphasis on its symbolic or political role within these populations.
Another hypothesis has attracted immense interest: could Göbekli Tepe also have been designed with the sky in mind?
Some researchers have suggested that several enclosures are oriented in specific ways towards certain rising or setting celestial bodies. Others have drawn parallels with specific constellations or astronomical phenomena.

These ideas are fascinating. They demonstrate just how important the observation of the sky may already have been in prehistoric societies. However, it is essential to distinguish between facts and hypotheses. To date, there is no scientific consensus to confirm that Göbekli Tepe was an astronomical observatory or a sanctuary devoted exclusively to the sky. The alignments observed may have several explanations, and interpretations remain the subject of active debate. This caution in no way detracts from the fascination exerted by the site.

Even if its exact function remains unknown, Göbekli Tepe reveals that, more than eleven millennia ago, there were already communities capable of mobilising hundreds of people around a common project, creating monumental architecture and passing on a rich symbolic universe.

Was the sky part of this universe?

It is highly likely that it did.

Since the first episodes of this series, we have seen how closely prehistoric societies were already attuned to the observation of celestial cycles. It would be surprising if a site of such importance had been built without taking into account the rhythms of nature, the Sun, the Moon or the stars. But in what form? This is precisely what researchers are still trying to understand.

Göbekli Tepe reminds us of a vital lesson. Not all the answers are known yet. Archaeology advances through discoveries, comparisons and debates. Each new excavation sometimes yields an unexpected finding that forces us to revisit theories established decades ago. That is also what makes this period so fascinating. In a sense, we are still explorers of the past.

Even before the advent of writing, magnificent monuments already bore witness to complex thinking and a remarkable capacity for organisation. They show that the roots of human culture are far older and richer than was previously imagined.
In our next episode, we'll discover another equally famous monument: Stonehenge. For centuries, this circle of standing stones has fuelled a wide range of theories. Was it a temple, a calendar, an observatory or a gathering place? What do archaeological investigations actually tell us about this monument, which has become one of the most famous in the world?

Episode 9: Stonehenge – the monument that interacts with the Sun

In the heart of the plains of southern England stands one of the most famous monuments in human history. For centuries, Stonehenge has intrigued travellers, inspired artists and fuelled a wide range of theories.
How did prehistoric peoples manage to transport and then erect stone blocks, some weighing several dozen tonnes? Why did they devote so much effort to building a monument whose purpose still eludes us to some extent?
These questions have long fascinated archaeologists.
Research now shows that Stonehenge was not built in a single phase. Its construction spanned nearly fifteen centuries, from around 3000 to 1500 BCE. Several generations were involved in its expansion, gradually altering its architecture over the centuries.
The monument we admire today is therefore merely the final result of a very long history. The complex consists of

gigantic blocks of sandstone known as *sarsens*, some of which are over seven metres high and weigh up to twenty-five tonnes. Added to these are the famous ‘blue stones’, which are much smaller but were quarried in Wales, more than two hundred kilometres from the site.

The transport of these stones remains a remarkable technical feat to this day. But what particularly captures researchers’ attention is the monument’s orientation. Every year, at the summer solstice, the Sun rises exactly along Stonehenge’s main axis. The first rays appear above the famous Heel Stone before gradually illuminating the centre of the monument.

Conversely, at the winter solstice, the Sun sets along the opposite axis. This dual orientation is no coincidence. It is now widely recognised by archaeologists as one of the fundamental principles behind the monument’s design. The builders had therefore identified, with remarkable precision, the two moments when the Sun reaches the extremes of its annual path.

Why was this orientation so important?

The summer solstice marks the longest day of the year, whilst the winter solstice gradually heralds the return of brighter days. For societies living directly in tune with the seasons, these two events were of considerable importance. They set the rhythm for agricultural activities, journeys, gatherings and probably certain communal celebrations.

Stonehenge thus appears to be a gigantic stone calendar. It was, of course, not a calendar like those we use today. But the monument made it possible to pinpoint key moments in the solar year with precision.

Over time, other hypotheses were put forward. Some researchers have suggested that Stonehenge may also have been used to observe the cycles of the Moon. Others have seen it as a site dedicated to ancestors, funeral ceremonies, healing, or gatherings of people from distant regions.

Here too, research continues. It is now thought likely that Stonehenge served several functions simultaneously. Prehistoric societies probably did not separate science, religion, social life and the observation of the heavens in the way we do today. A single site could serve as a ceremonial space, a calendar, a gathering place and a collective symbol all at once.

This holistic view helps us to better understand ancient monuments. They were not built to fulfil a single function, but to meet several needs that were deeply intertwined.

Above all, Stonehenge bears witness to an extraordinary mastery of astronomical observation.

Generations of observers had learnt to track the Sun's movement with sufficient precision to align a monumental structure with the two most important events of the solar year. Such knowledge required patient, repeated observations over many years. The sky thus became a permanent reference point for organising human life.

The history of astrology does not yet begin here. But one of its foundations is now firmly in place: the idea that celestial movements can be observed, understood and used to give rhythm to the life of societies.

In the next episode, we shall leave behind the great stone monuments to take a decisive step forward in human history. We shall journey to the plains of Mesopotamia, where the first cities, the first writing systems and the first records devoted to the systematic observation of the sky

would emerge. With these, the history of astronomy would truly begin… and soon that of astrology too.

Episode 10: When the Sky Became a Memory

Since the first episode of this series, we have travelled a journey spanning tens of thousands of years.
We have met the first hunter-gatherers gazing up at the starry sky. We have discovered how the Moon became humanity's first clock, how the seasons led to the birth of the first calendars, how the stars were grouped into constellations, and how the mysterious planets gradually caught the attention of observers.
We also visited two of prehistory's most famous monuments, Göbekli Tepe and Stonehenge, which bear witness to a growing interest in the rhythms of the heavens.
At first glance, these discoveries seem very different from one another.
Yet they all tell the same story. That of a humanity gradually learning to observe. Even before seeking explanations, the first human beings developed a quality that would transform their destiny: patience. Observing a full moon return each month, noting that certain stars always heralded the same season, or noticing that a planet slowly changed position required sustained attention over years, sometimes even across several generations.
This patience was the first school for astronomers. But another step was to prove just as important: memory. For millennia, knowledge was passed on orally. The elders taught the younger generations about the movements of the stars, the dates of the solstices, the phases of the Moon

and the landmarks used for navigation. Each generation added a little to this legacy before passing it on in turn.
This collective memory made it possible to accumulate a considerable amount of observations. The movements of the heavens were too slow to be understood within a single lifetime. Some planets take several decades to complete a full cycle. Without the passing on of knowledge, it would have been impossible to discover their patterns.
Gradually, this memory became increasingly accurate. Human societies learnt to compare observations, correct certain errors and recognise ever more complex cycles. The sky was gradually ceasing to be a mere backdrop. It was becoming a vast book from which each generation deciphered a few more pages.
Yet this memory had its limits. However faithful oral traditions may be, they remain fragile. Stories change; some details are forgotten, whilst others become distorted over time. The more observations there were, the harder it became to preserve them.
An invention was soon to change everything: writing.
Thanks to it, observations would no longer depend solely on human memory. They could be recorded, preserved, compared and added to over the centuries.
This revolution would take place in a region of the world that historians now call Mesopotamia. Between the Tigris and the Euphrates, the first great cities, the first scribes, the first temples and the first libraries would emerge. There, priests would record with remarkable precision eclipses, the movements of the planets, the phases of the Moon and the positions of the stars.
For the first time, the observation of the sky would become a true discipline.

It was here that the first star catalogues, the first systematic surveys and the first attempts to predict celestial phenomena came into being. We are therefore gradually leaving the world of prehistory behind.

The season that is drawing to a close has helped us understand that astrology did not appear suddenly. It is the culmination of a vast body of observational work that began long before the first civilisations.

Before the astrologers, there were observers.

Before horoscopes, there were calendars.

Before predictions, there was patience.

It was this long human journey that, several millennia later, led to the birth of the first astronomical and astrological traditions.

In the next series, we will take a decisive step forward. We will travel to Mesopotamia, where the first cities permanently transformed humanity's relationship with the heavens. We will discover the Sumerians, the first scribes, the ziggurats, the great clay tablets and the extraordinary observers who laid the foundations of astronomy and astrology. The journey continues.

Season 2: The First Astronomers

Episode 1 Sumer: where the history of the heavens changed forever

For tens of thousands of years, knowledge of the heavens was passed down by word of mouth. Each generation taught the next about the movements of the Sun, the phases of the Moon, the return of the seasons and the slow journey of the planets amongst the stars.

Then, just over five thousand years ago, something changed profoundly.

On a vast plain situated between two great rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, the first great cities in history emerged. Historians call this region Mesopotamia, a Greek word literally meaning ‘the land between the rivers’.

It was there that one of the most extraordinary civilisations of antiquity was born: Sumer.

The Sumerians were not the first human beings to observe the sky. For millennia, other peoples had already been gazing at the stars, the Moon and the planets. Their true revolution lay elsewhere. They began to write. This invention would permanently transform the way knowledge was preserved.

Instead of relying solely on the memory of their elders, observations could now be inscribed on clay tablets. An eclipse observed today could be read again several generations later. The positions of the planets could be compared over the centuries. Errors could be corrected. Discoveries accumulated.

For the first time in human history, the heavens had a written record. Sumerian cities, such as Ur, Uruk, Eridu,

Lagash and Nippur, quickly became major intellectual centres. They had temples, schools for scribes, administrators and priests responsible for numerous functions, amongst which the observation of celestial phenomena already played a significant role.

Daily life depended largely on the rhythms of nature. River floods, sowing seasons, harvests and religious festivals demanded an ever more precise measurement of time. Observing the heavens was therefore not merely a matter of intellectual curiosity. It was a necessity for organising society.

The scribes recorded important events with remarkable meticulousness. They noted harvests, trade, political decisions, but also natural phenomena deemed exceptional: eclipses, comets, unusual planetary movements or remarkable meteorological phenomena.

These archives now constitute an exceptional source for historians. Thanks to them, we can trace the development of astronomical knowledge over several centuries, and then over several millennia.

It is, however, important to qualify a widely held belief. The earliest Sumerian texts do not yet describe a form of astrology comparable to that which we know today. There are no individual horoscopes, no natal charts, nor any psychological interpretation of planetary positions.

The observations primarily concern the celestial phenomena themselves and their possible significance for the community, the kingdom or its ruler.

Personal astrology would not emerge until much later. We are still in an era where the sky is observed as a vast array of signs capable of shedding light on the major events in the lives of cities.

This distinction is essential. It shows that astrology did not emerge in its present form. It developed gradually, over the centuries, as astronomical knowledge became more precise.
The Sumerians bequeathed to us far more than just a few observations of the sky. They pioneered a method: observing with rigour; recording with precision; comparing phenomena; and passing on knowledge.
These principles form the true starting point of the entire history of astronomy… and astrology. For the first time, the sky became a subject of ongoing study.
In the next episode, we shall climb the steps of the impressive ziggurats, those gigantic temples that towered over the cities of Mesopotamia. Were they merely religious buildings? Did they also serve as observatories? And why were these monuments built so close to the stars, at least in appearance?
The journey to the first astronomers has only just begun.

Episode 2: The Ziggurats: Mountains Between Earth and Sky

Arriving in a major city of Mesopotamia over four thousand years ago, a traveller would have been immediately struck by a gigantic monument dominating the horizon. Rising above the sun-dried mud-brick houses stood a vast stepped structure, visible from several kilometres away. Its summit seemed almost to touch the sky. The inhabitants called it a ziggurat. Even today, these monuments continue to impress archaeologists. Their silhouette is sometimes reminiscent of a stepped pyramid, but their function was quite different. Ziggurats were not

tombs, like the pyramids of Egypt. They formed the religious heart of the great Mesopotamian cities.
Every major city had its own. Over the centuries, Ur, Uruk, Nippur, Eridu and Babylon erected immense ziggurats dedicated to their principal deities. The summit usually housed a sanctuary regarded as the symbolic abode of the city's patron god.
Why were these temples built so high?
Ancient texts do not provide a single answer, but several reasons appear to complement one another.
The first is symbolic. In many ancient traditions, the mountain represents a meeting place between heaven and earth. However, Lower Mesopotamia is a vast plain where natural elevations are almost non-existent. By building artificial mountains, the Sumerian ‘ ’ gave visible form to this idea of ascending towards the divine realm.
The second reason is more practical. From the summit of a ziggurat, one's gaze could reach much further than from the ground. One could look out over the city, the surrounding countryside and, above all, the horizon. This vantage point also offered an excellent view of the sky. As the Sun disappeared behind the horizon, the stars became visible one after the other. The rising and setting of the planets could be observed more easily. Eclipses, conjunctions or unusual celestial phenomena immediately caught the attention of the priests responsible for monitoring them.
But does this mean we should regard ziggurats as the first astronomical observatories?
The answer requires some qualification. No archaeological excavation has uncovered observational instruments comparable to those found much later in

Greek, Arab-Persian or European observatories. Ziggurats were not built solely for the study of the stars. However, it is highly likely that the priests regularly observed the sky from them. Their height, their unobstructed view of the horizon and their religious function naturally made these monuments particularly well-suited to this activity. At that time, moreover, there was no distinction between what we now call religion, astronomy, the calendar or administration. The same men might perform rituals, organise festivals, maintain the city's archives, calculate the calendars and monitor celestial phenomena. All these activities were part of a single understanding of the order of the world.

The ziggurats were thus much more than mere buildings. They embodied the organisation of the city around a common principle: linking human life to the great rhythms of nature and the heavens. Every sunrise, every new moon, every appearance of a planet served as a reminder that time flowed with a regularity which the priests strove to understand ever more deeply.

Over the generations, their observations became increasingly precise. Thousands of clay tablets recorded the dates of eclipses, the movements of the planets and phenomena deemed remarkable. This painstaking accumulation of information gradually made it possible to recognise ever-longer cycles and to compile the first celestial catalogues.

A new milestone had been reached. The sky was no longer merely contemplated; it was being methodically observed. This distinction is crucial. Observing for the sake of wonder is one thing; observing in order to compare, measure, record and pass on the results is quite another. It

was precisely this approach that would give rise to the earliest astronomical traditions in history.
In the next episode, we shall examine the clay tablets left behind by the Mesopotamian scribes. We shall discover how these thousands of inscriptions have enabled us to reconstruct the earliest systematic observations of the sky, and why they remain, even today, an irreplaceable source for understanding the origins of astronomy and astrology.

Episode 3 Clay tablets: when the sky began to write its history

For thousands of years, knowledge of the heavens was entrusted to human memory. Each generation taught the next the dates of the seasons, the phases of the Moon, the appearance of the stars and the movements of the planets. But however reliable it may be, human memory has its limits. Memories fade, stories are altered, and certain details are lost over time.
The invention of writing changed this situation forever. Towards the end of the 4th millennium BCE, the Sumerians developed one of the earliest known writing systems: cuneiform. Using a bevelled reed stylus, scribes carved small wedge-shaped marks into tablets of still-wet clay.
Once dried in the sun or fired, these tablets became remarkably durable.
Paradoxically, the very forces of time that destroyed so many monuments often helped to preserve these humble pieces of clay. The fires that ravaged certain cities fired the tablets, sometimes making them even more durable.

Several thousand of them have thus survived to the present day.

Today, they form an extraordinary library from the mists of time. They include commercial contracts, religious texts, laws, administrative lists, mythological tales… but also observations of the sky. These documents were not all written in a single era. They span nearly two millennia of history and bear witness to the successive, work of the Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians and Assyrians. Each civilisation inherited the knowledge of its predecessor, built upon it and, in turn, passed it on.

This continuity is one of the finest examples of the transmission of knowledge in antiquity. Scribes recorded celestial phenomena with remarkable precision. They noted the phases of the Moon, eclipses, the appearances of Venus, the movements of the visible planets, certain notable conjunctions, and various unusual phenomena observed in the sky. These observations were not always made on a daily basis. However, their accumulation over the centuries made it possible to build up an unprecedented astronomical record.

One of the most famous examples is the **Enūma Anu Enlil** series. This vast collection, compiled gradually from the 2nd millennium BCE onwards, brings together several thousand observations and interpretations concerning celestial phenomena. It bears witness to the desire of Mesopotamian scholars to draw parallels between events in the sky and those in political, religious or social life.

A few centuries later, the famous *Babylonian Astronomical Tables* also appeared. For several hundred years, observers methodically recorded in them the

positions of the planets, eclipses, weather conditions, river levels and other notable events. These documents remain a valuable source for historians of astronomy to this day.

What is most striking when reading these texts is the rigour of their authors. They did not merely observe. They compared. They verified. They accumulated data.

They sought patterns. This approach already foreshadowed the scientific spirit. Admittedly, their interpretations differed profoundly from our own. Celestial phenomena were often understood within a religious or symbolic framework. But the method of observation itself was already based on meticulous attention to the facts.

It was precisely this accumulation of data that gradually led to the discovery of the major planetary cycles. The richer the records became, the more it became possible to anticipate certain phenomena, notably eclipses or the periodic returns of certain celestial configurations. The sky gradually revealed its extraordinary regularity. For the first time in history, humanity had a sufficient number of observations to compare one generation with another.

Astronomy had just crossed a decisive threshold. And it was from this vast body of written records that what we now call astrology would gradually emerge. For a question would soon present itself to the Mesopotamian priests. If the movements of the stars follow such a precise order, might they also foretell certain earthly events?

This question would mark the beginning of a new stage in our journey. In the next episode, we shall discover how the first celestial omens appeared in Mesopotamia and why eclipses, comets and the movements of the planets came to be regarded as signs that needed to be interpreted.

Episode 4 The First Omens: When the Sky Began to Speak

For several generations, the priests and scribes of Mesopotamia had been observing the sky with remarkable patience. They noted the phases of the Moon, tracked the movements of the planets, recorded eclipses and documented the most unusual phenomena. Clay tablets gradually accumulated in temples and palaces. A question eventually arose.

Are these celestial phenomena merely natural events, or do they sometimes foreshadow what is to come on Earth? This question marked a decisive turning point in the history of human thought.

Today, we tend to draw a clear distinction between scientific observation and symbolic interpretation. For the peoples of ancient Mesopotamia, this distinction did not yet exist. The world formed a single whole. Celestial, terrestrial and human phenomena all belonged to the same cosmic order.

In this view, the heavens could be a source of omens. It is essential to understand clearly what the word ‘omen’ meant. Mesopotamian priests did not believe that the stars caused events. Rather, they sought to recognise correspondences between certain celestial phenomena and significant events observed in the life of kingdoms. In other words, they drew comparisons. When an eclipse had preceded a famine, a war or the death of a ruler, they carefully recorded this observation. If a similar phenomenon recurred several generations later, they would consult the archives to find out what had happened previously. This is a far cry from the modern horoscope.

Omens primarily concerned collective destiny: the prosperity of the kingdom, harvests, river floods, military conflicts, the king's health or political stability. The ruler, moreover, occupied a special place. In Mesopotamian thought, the king represented the entire kingdom. An omen concerning him could be interpreted as heralding an event affecting the whole of society.

The phenomena observed were extremely varied.

A solar eclipse. A lunar eclipse. The appearance of a comet. A particularly bright planet. An unusual conjunction. A halo around the Moon. A meteor shower. All these events were carefully recorded.

The aim was not to predict the future in the sense that we understand it today. Rather, the priests sought to recognise patterns, convinced that the order of the heavens and that of society were deeply interconnected, and that it was their duty to understand this connection.

Over the centuries, this vast collection of observations gave rise to veritable compendia of omens. The most famous of these is the *Enūma Anu Enlil*, a vast compilation of several dozen tablets bringing together thousands of correspondences between celestial phenomena and earthly events. It contains characteristic phrases such as: 'If a lunar eclipse occurs under such conditions, then…' Or: 'If Venus appears in such a way, then…'

These texts are not narratives. They are more like immense catalogues in which each observation is linked to an interpretation handed down through tradition.

It would, however, be misleading to regard this as a science in the modern sense. Mesopotamian priests reasoned within a world in which the religious, political, natural and celestial realms were deeply intertwined. Their

aim was not to explain physical phenomena, but to understand the significance of events within the framework of their worldview. This distinction is essential to avoid misunderstandings. These early omens do not yet constitute individual astrology. They represent the first systematic attempt to link phenomena observed in the sky with those observed on Earth.

Whatever conclusions we may draw from them today, this approach demonstrates a remarkable determination to compare observations accumulated over several centuries. The history of astrology has thus crossed a new threshold. Having learnt to observe the sky, humankind is now beginning to question it.

In the next episode, we shall discover one of the phenomena that inspired the greatest fear in ancient peoples: eclipses. Why did the sudden disappearance of the Sun or the Moon provoke such strong emotions? And how did Mesopotamian astronomers gradually manage to predict these events, which once seemed to upset the order of the world?

Episode 5 Eclipses: when the Sun disappeared

Imagine the scene for a moment. The Sun shines over the countryside of Mesopotamia. Daily life goes on as usual. Then, slowly, a strange darkness begins to envelop the landscape. The birds stop singing. The animals fall silent. Shadows shift shape. Within minutes, day seems to turn to twilight.

For the peoples of antiquity, a total solar eclipse must have been a profoundly unsettling experience.

Today, we know that a solar eclipse occurs when the Moon passes exactly between the Earth and the Sun, momentarily blocking out its light. We can also predict these phenomena with an accuracy of a few seconds.

But more than three thousand years ago, no one knew this explanation. Eclipses seemed to occur without warning. They abruptly interrupted the normal course of the heavens. The Sun, a symbol of stability and regularity, suddenly disappeared. Such an exceptional event could not fail to attract the attention of observers.

Lunar eclipses were just as impressive. Instead of disappearing completely, the Moon would sometimes take on a striking coppery-red colour before gradually regaining its usual brilliance. This spectacle fuelled numerous mythological tales across the world.

Very early on, Mesopotamian astronomers realised that a record of these phenomena had to be kept. Every observed eclipse was carefully noted on clay tablets: the date, the approximate duration, the part of the sky affected and the circumstances of its occurrence.

At first, these observations seemed to be isolated incidents.

But over the centuries, a remarkable regularity began to emerge. Eclipses seemed to recur according to certain patterns. Babylonian astronomers gradually discovered that, after a period of approximately eighteen years, eleven days and eight hours, very similar eclipses would occur again. This cycle is now known as the Saros cycle. The principle behind it was already in use in Mesopotamia several centuries before our era, although the astronomers of the time obviously did not have the physical explanations that we have today.

This discovery marked a crucial milestone in the history of science. For the first time, a phenomenon that had seemed entirely unpredictable revealed remarkable regularity. The heavens were therefore not left to chance; they obeyed cycles. This idea was to profoundly transform the way the stars were observed.

Eclipses remained exceptional events, but they gradually became predictable. Astronomers could now forecast their return with increasing accuracy. Priests naturally continued to attach particular significance to them. In Mesopotamian collections of omens, an eclipse might foreshadow events concerning the king, the harvests or the stability of the kingdom. Rituals were sometimes organised to ward off the feared consequences.

It is, however, important to distinguish between two approaches that coexisted.

On the one hand, astronomers were constantly refining their calculations and observations.

On the other, symbolic interpretations continued to form part of the religious and political culture of the time.

These two approaches were not at odds with one another. They complemented one another within a worldview in which understanding the rhythms of the heavens also meant gaining a deeper understanding of the order of the universe.

Eclipses perfectly illustrate this dual development. The more they were observed, the less they appeared to be chaotic phenomena. They became manifestations of a deeper order, accessible to patient observers. This confidence in the regularity of celestial movements would pave the way for a new ambition. If eclipses could be predicted, why not the movements of the planets?

It was precisely this question that would lead Mesopotamian astronomers to devote centuries to tracking the mysterious wandering stars with ever-greater precision.
In the next episode, we shall set out to explore these five planets visible to the naked eye. We shall discover how the Babylonians learnt to recognise their cycles, why each was given a distinct identity, and how they gradually became the main protagonists in the history of astrology.

Episode 6 The Five Wandering Stars: The Birth of the First Planets

For several centuries, Mesopotamian astronomers had been observing the sky with remarkable rigour. Eclipses were carefully recorded, the phases of the Moon were tracked with precision, and the constellations now served as reliable reference points.
But five celestial bodies continued to hold a particular fascination. Unlike the thousands of stars that always maintained the same relative positions, these five lights seemed to lead a life of their own. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, they moved amongst the constellations, sometimes in one direction, sometimes appearing to slow down, stop or even retrace their steps.
These mysterious travellers were to become the main subjects of study for the astronomers of antiquity. Today, we call them Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.
The peoples of Mesopotamia were, of course, unaware of their physical nature, their true distance, or the fact that they were worlds orbiting the Sun. To them, these celestial bodies simply belonged to a particular category: that of the

stars that move. Their first task was therefore to recognise them.

This may seem obvious today, but distinguishing a planet amongst thousands of stars was not so straightforward. It was necessary to observe the sky regularly for several weeks, sometimes several months, in order to notice that a point of light had changed position. Gradually, each planet revealed its own astronomical character. Mercury was the most difficult to track. Always close to the Sun, it appeared only for a few moments before dawn or after sunset. Observing it required considerable experience. Venus, on the other hand, often dominated the sky with its extraordinary brilliance. Visible sometimes in the morning, sometimes in the evening, it would disappear for a while before reappearing on the other side of the Sun. For a long time, many peoples believed them to be two different celestial bodies before realising that they were in fact one and the same. Mars was distinguished by its reddish colour. Its brightness varied considerably over the years. On certain nights, it became one of the brightest objects in the sky, immediately catching the attention of observers.

Jupiter was remarkable for its regularity. Bright without being dazzling, it moved slowly amongst the constellations at a pace that seemed remarkably constant.

Saturn, finally, appeared to be the slowest of the five. It took nearly thirty years to see it complete a full circuit of the zodiac. A whole lifetime was barely enough to observe a single one of its great cycles.

Astronomers gradually realised that each of these planets had its own rhythm. This discovery was of paramount importance. The sky was no longer made up of objects

moving in unpredictable ways. Each planet seemed to follow its own specific laws, with periods of visibility, speeds and trajectories unique to itself.

Another phenomenon soon caught their attention. At times, certain planets appeared to slow down, come to a standstill, then move in the opposite direction before resuming their usual course. We now know that this is apparent retrograde motion, caused by the relative movements of the Earth and the other planets around the Sun. The Mesopotamian astronomers were unaware of this explanation. Nevertheless, they observed with precision that this phenomenon recurred regularly. Far from calling the order of the heavens into question, these complex movements reinforced their conviction that the planets obeyed perfectly organised cycles, even if the mechanisms behind them remained a mystery. This patience was to be rewarded. By accumulating observations over time, the astronomers became able to predict with increasing accuracy the periods when the planets would be visible, their stations and their movements amongst the constellations. A true map of the heavens was taking shape. For the first time, the movements of the planets could be anticipated. This ability represented a considerable advance. It reflected a newfound confidence in the existence of a cosmic order that methodical observation was gradually revealing.

But another question was soon to arise.

Why did each of these planets seem to follow such a distinctive pattern? Were they simply different in their motion, or did they also possess their own distinct identity?

The peoples of Mesopotamia would gradually answer this question by associating each planet with a major deity from their pantheon. Thus began one of humanity's longest symbolic histories. It is this convergence of astronomical observation and symbolic thought that we shall explore in the next episode.

Episode 7: When the Planets Were Given Names

For several centuries, Mesopotamian astronomers had been observing the five wandering stars with remarkable precision. They knew their rhythms, tracked their movements amongst the constellations and recorded their appearances on thousands of clay tablets.
But a new milestone was soon to be reached. As observations accumulated, these mysterious celestial bodies ceased to be mere points of light. Each seemed to possess a distinct behaviour, almost a personality. Some moved quickly, others very slowly. Some shone brightly, others were more subdued. Astronomers could now clearly distinguish their respective characteristics. In Mesopotamian thought, this uniqueness naturally calls for an interpretation. The visible world and the divine world are not separate. Natural phenomena express an order that transcends human beings. It therefore becomes natural to associate the major celestial bodies with certain deities of the pantheon. The Sun is linked to the god Utu, later known as Shamash in Akkadian. Every morning, it illuminates the world without distinction. Its light reveals what was hidden, upholds justice and ensures the proper order of things. Its daily path becomes the image of an all-seeing presence before which nothing can remain

concealed. The Moon is associated with the god Nanna, whom the Akkadians would call Sîn. Its regular cycle sets the rhythm for the months, festivals and the organisation of the calendar. Its ceaseless return after each disappearance makes it a major symbol of the renewal of time. Among the planets, Venus occupies a unique position. Its remarkable brilliance has fascinated observers since the earliest times. The Mesopotamians associated it with the goddess Inanna, who became Ishtar among the Akkadians. A complex deity, she embodies aspects that we sometimes tend to separate today: love, fertility and power, but also war, sovereignty and transformation. This symbolic richness perhaps reflects the very behaviour of the planet itself. Visible sometimes before dawn, sometimes after sunset, disappearing and then reappearing in a regular cycle, Venus seemed to undergo a constant succession of metamorphoses.

Jupiter is associated with the god Marduk. In second-millennium BCE Babylon, Marduk gradually became the city's principal deity. Jupiter's slow majesty, its steady brilliance and its regular path reinforce this identification with the god who protected the kingdom. Mercury is linked to the god Nabu. As the patron of scribes, writing and knowledge, Nabu held a vital place in a civilisation where the transmission of knowledge had become a fundamental value. Mercury's mobility, always close to the Sun, seemed to correspond to the messenger's ceaseless activity. Mars is associated with the god Nergal. Its reddish colour, visible to the naked eye, made a profound impression on observers. Unsurprisingly, this planet became the symbol of a power linked to war, epidemics and the destructive forces of nature. Finally,

Saturn is generally associated with the god Ninurta. Its slow progression through the constellations gives it a distinctive presence. It evokes stability, perseverance and the great cycles that far exceed the span of a human life.
It is important not to interpret these associations through the lens of our modern categories. The Mesopotamians did not say that the planets ‘were’ the gods. Rather, they saw in their celestial behaviour a manifestation of the cosmic order with which these deities were themselves associated. The sky thus became a vast symbolic language in which the stars expressed the great powers that organised the world. This way of thinking would profoundly influence the entire history of astrology.
When the Greeks came into contact with Mesopotamian knowledge, they gradually identified these same planets with their own deities: Aphrodite replaced Inanna, Ares took the place of Nergal, Hermes that of Nabu, Zeus that of Marduk and Cronus that of Ninurta.
A few centuries later, the Romans, in turn, would carry out this cultural translation. This is how the names we still use today came into being: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. Behind each of these names, therefore, lies a history far older than Greek or Roman civilisation. It has its roots in the earliest observations made by the astronomers of Mesopotamia. The history of the planets is also the history of civilisations. And this story has only just begun.
In the next episode, we’ll discover how Babylonian astronomers managed to predict the movements of the planets with ever-greater accuracy, making Babylon one of the greatest centres of science in the ancient world.

Episode 8: The Mathematicians of the Sky: When Babylon Learnt to Predict the Planets

Observing the sky is one thing. Predicting the movements of the celestial bodies is quite another. Over several centuries, Mesopotamian astronomers had accumulated an impressive body of observations. Clay tablets recorded eclipses, the phases of the Moon, the appearances of the planets and their movements amongst the constellations.

But these records were soon to open up new horizons. By comparing their observations, Babylonian scholars discovered that the planets did not move at random. Each followed patterns that recurred with astonishing regularity. This realisation transformed the way they worked. It was no longer enough simply to look at the sky; it became possible to anticipate the movements of the celestial bodies.

To achieve this, astronomers developed methods of calculation that still astonish historians of science. The Babylonians used a base-sixty number system. Unlike our decimal system, which is based on the number ten, their method made it possible to carry out numerous divisions with great ease. We still retain several legacies of this today. An hour has sixty minutes. A minute has sixty seconds. A circle is divided into three hundred and sixty degrees. All these conventions have their origins in Mesopotamian mathematics.

Thanks to these tools, astronomers were able to calculate the periods during which the planets were visible, predict certain e clipses and estimate the dates on which many celestial phenomena would recur. Their aim was not yet to explain why the planets moved. That question would be

left more to the Greek astronomers. The Babylonians adopted a different approach. Above all, they sought to describe the observed movements with sufficient precision to predict their recurrence. This approach proved remarkably effective.

Without any knowledge of gravity, without telescopes and without a heliocentric model, they succeeded in devising calculation methods of astonishing precision for their time. Several clay tablets show that they were capable of using complex mathematical procedures to estimate the future positions of certain planets.

In the 21st century, several historians have even demonstrated that certain Babylonian astronomers were already employing highly sophisticated geometric reasoning. Recently discovered tablets indicate that they calculated the apparent motion of Jupiter by plotting certain variations in its movement. This discovery has profoundly transformed our understanding of Babylonian scientific knowledge. This work bears witness to a genuine intellectual revolution. The sky was gradually ceasing to be merely observed. It was becoming calculable. This development was to permanently transform the entire history of astronomy.

The Greeks would inherit a large part of these observations. They would then seek to construct geometric models capable of explaining the movements of the planets.

Arab astronomers would further refine these calculations. Then came Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo and Newton.

The history of science thus forms a vast chain in which each civilisation builds upon the discoveries of its predecessors. Babylon was one of its essential links. Its

astronomers demonstrated that celestial phenomena could be studied methodically, compared, calculated and, to a certain extent, predicted. This confidence in the existence of regular laws represents one of the greatest legacies of Mesopotamian civilisation. But another revolution was underway. As calculations became more precise, astronomers began to take an interest not only in events affecting kingdoms, but also in the births of individuals. A new idea was about to emerge. What if the sky on the day of our birth also held a special significance?
This question was to give rise to an entirely new form of astrology. We shall discover this extraordinary innovation in the next episode.

Episode 9: The First Horoscopes: When the Heavens Met Birth

For several centuries, Babylonian astronomers had been observing the heavens with remarkable precision. The movements of the planets were becoming increasingly well understood, eclipses were becoming predictable, and celestial phenomena were carefully recorded on thousands of clay tablets. Until now, these observations had mainly concerned the fate of kingdoms. An eclipse- ation might herald a difficult period for the ruler. A particular configuration of Venus might be interpreted as a sign concerning harvests, wars or the city's prosperity. The focus was on the collective. Then, slowly, a new idea emerged. What if the precise moment of a human being's birth also held particular significance?
This question marks a genuine revolution. For the first time, attention is no longer focused solely on the major

events of history, but also on the beginning of an individual's life.

The oldest known Babylonian horoscopes date from the 5th century BCE. They are engraved on small clay tablets, many of which are now preserved in museums. Their content may surprise the modern reader. They bear no resemblance to today's astrological charts. They contain neither astrological houses, nor a calculated Ascendant, nor lengthy psychological interpretations. The texts mainly indicate the date of birth, the position of a few planets, and sometimes the phase of the Moon or certain celestial phenomena observed at the same time. These documents are remarkably straightforward. A horoscope might simply state that a person was born on a certain day, whilst the Moon was in a particular region of the sky, Jupiter was visible, Venus appeared in the west, or no eclipse was reported. To our eyes, this information seems limited. For the Babylonian scholars, however, it represented a tremendous innovation. From then on, the sky became a witness to the beginning of a life.

Why did this development occur?

Historians offer several explanations. Astronomical knowledge had become precise enough to determine the positions of the stars on a given date with greater reliability. At the same time, traditions of omens had gradually shown that certain celestial phenomena were associated with events on Earth.

It therefore became natural to consider the moment of birth.

The Babylonians were not yet seeking to describe an individual's personality, as Greek, Arab or medieval astrologers would do much later. They were more

interested in what this birth might portend within the framework of the beliefs of their time.

The fundamental idea was therefore not yet that of a psychological portrait. Rather, it consisted of situating a birth within the general order of the cosmos.

This distinction is essential. When we speak of astrology today, we often think of the study of character, talents or human relationships. None of this appears yet in the earliest Babylonian horoscopes. They represent the starting point of a long evolution that would continue for several centuries.

The Greeks would subsequently play a decisive role. By integrating Mesopotamian astronomical knowledge into their own philosophy, they would gradually develop a much more structured form of astrology. The twelve signs of the zodiac would be organised more systematically, astrological houses would emerge, and individual interpretation would take on increasing importance.

The earliest Babylonian horoscopes thus resemble the first stones of a vast edifice. They are simple. Sometimes even very modest. But they ushered in an entirely new way of looking at the sky. For the first time, an individual's birth was linked to the configuration of the stars observed at that very moment. This innovation would endure through the centuries. It would be taken up, transformed, enriched, debated and reinterpreted by all the major astrological traditions that followed. The history of the birth chart had truly begun.

In the next episode, we shall gradually leave Babylonia behind to follow the extraordinary journey of this knowledge to the Greek world. We shall discover how the scholars of the Mediterranean took up this legacy and

shaped it in a way that would leave a lasting mark on the entire history of Western astrology.

Episode 10: The Legacy of Babylon: When Knowledge Crossed Borders

When we think of Mesopotamia today, we often picture a civilisation that disappeared millennia ago. Yet its legacy is still all around us, sometimes without us even realising it.

For nearly two thousand years, astronomers from Sumer, Akkad, Assyria and later Babylon observed the sky with extraordinary patience. They noted the phases of the Moon, tracked the movements of the planets, recorded eclipses, drew up calendars, perfected calculation methods and built up a vast astronomical archive engraved on thousands of clay tablets.

Their work extends far beyond their own era. Over the centuries, trade, military conquests and contact between peoples fostered the spread of knowledge. Caravans did not merely transport goods; they also carried ideas, techniques, stories and knowledge.

Astronomical observations were no exception to this trend. Scholars from neighbouring civilisations gradually discovered the methods developed in Mesopotamia. Astronomical knowledge began to spread to Syria, Anatolia, Persia and, later, to the Greek cities of the Mediterranean basin.

This transmission was never a mere copying. Each civilisation adapted the heritage it received to its own culture. The Babylonians had established a remarkable tradition of observation and calculation. The Greeks would

soon contribute their penchant for geometric proof and philosophical reflection. The Egyptians enriched the calendars thanks to their long experience of the solar cycle. Scholars of the Hellenistic period gradually brought these different traditions together into a vast synthesis.

The history of science rarely resembles a succession of isolated discoveries. It is made up of dialogues between peoples. One civilisation observes. Another refines. A third reorganises knowledge. A fourth, in turn, passes it on. Astronomy and astrology provide a splendid illustration of this continuity. Far from being the work of a single people or a single genius, they are the result of an immense collective endeavour spanning several millennia.

It is also important to remember that the boundaries between disciplines were very different back then from those we have today. The same scholar might observe the stars, draw up the calendar, advise the ruler, interpret certain celestial phenomena, administer a temple and teach young scribes. Knowledge formed a coherent whole in which the observation of nature occupied a central place.

This holistic view partly explains why the history of astronomy and that of astrology remained inextricably linked for so long. Both were based on the same observations of the sky. It was not until much later that their paths began to diverge.

By the end of this second series, one thing becomes clear. Astrology did not arise from a sudden revelation. It is the result of patient work involving observation, comparison, calculation and the passing on of knowledge. Long before the horoscopes we know today, generations of observers devoted their lives to understanding the rhythms of the heavens.

The earliest astronomers of Mesopotamia left behind an immense legacy. They passed on to us a method based on rigorous observation, accurate records and a commitment to preserving knowledge for future generations. Without them, much of the history of astronomy and astrology would undoubtedly have taken a very different course.

But our journey is merely changing scenery. We shall now leave the plains of Mesopotamia to reach the shores of the Aegean Sea. There, in the Greek cities, a new way of thinking is emerging. Philosophers are no longer content merely to observe the sky. They seek to understand why the stars move as they do. They develop models, discuss causes, compare ideas and, little by little, invent a new way of thinking about the world. With them, the history of astronomy and astrology enters a new era.

Season 3 will introduce us to Thales, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Hipparchus and many other thinkers who would profoundly transform our understanding of the heavens. The journey continues.

Season 3: The Greeks and the invention of a new way of thinking about the heavens

Episode 1: From Babylon to Greece: When the Heavens Changed Their Language

At the end of our second season, we discovered the remarkable work of the Mesopotamian astronomers. For nearly two thousand years, they observed the heavens with exemplary patience, recorded their discoveries on thousands of clay tablets and compiled the first major astronomical catalogues in history.

But knowledge never stands still. It travels with merchants, travellers, diplomats, conquerors and scholars. It crosses borders, sometimes changes language, is enriched by new ideas and gradually takes on unexpected forms.

This is exactly what happened between Mesopotamia and the Greek world. From the first millennium BCE onwards, trade flourished around the eastern Mediterranean. Greek city-states maintained trade links with Egypt, Phoenicia, Anatolia and the kingdoms of the Near East. Goods were exchanged, but so too were stories, techniques, skills and astronomical knowledge.

The Greeks did not, therefore, discover the heavens. They inherited a very ancient tradition of observation. What they were to contribute was of a different nature. They sought to understand. Until then, Mesopotamian astronomers had developed an extraordinary science of - observation. They knew how to recognise cycles, predict certain eclipses and calculate the apparent movements of the planets with remarkable precision. Greek philosophers

posed a further question. Why do the celestial bodies follow these trajectories?
Are there general principles that explain the organisation of the heavens?
This way of thinking represents a genuine intellectual revolution. Observation remains essential, but it is no longer sufficient. We must now construct models, test hypotheses, debate possible explanations and seek general laws capable of accounting for the observed phenomena. Philosophy and astronomy thus began to engage in dialogue. For the Greeks, contemplating the heavens was not merely a practical activity aimed at establishing a calendar or predicting an eclipse. It was also a way of reflecting on the order of the universe.
Why does the world appear to be organised?
Why do the seasons return with such regularity?
Why do the planets follow such precise cycles?
These questions go beyond mere observation. They touch upon the very nature of the cosmos. The word ‘cosmos’, moreover, is itself revealing. In ancient Greek, it denotes a harmonious order, an organised whole in which every element has its place. Observing the sky thus amounts to contemplating this harmony and attempting to understand its principles. This quest gradually transformed the way the stars were studied.
The calculations inherited from Babylon remained valuable, but they were now accompanied by philosophical reflection on the shape of the Earth, the structure of the universe, the motion of the planets and humanity’s place in the cosmos. This shift in perspective was to have an immense influence.

For more than fifteen centuries, astronomers, philosophers and astrologers would rely heavily on the models developed in the Greek world. Even when some of their conclusions were later corrected, their method of reasoning would continue to leave a profound mark on the history of science.

It would, however, be unfair to pit civilisations against one another. The Greeks did not replace the Babylonians; they built upon their legacy. The history of knowledge resembles a vast river rather than a succession of breaks. Each civilisation receives a heritage, transforms it, enriches it and, in turn, passes it on. It is precisely this that makes this human adventure so rich.

From now on, our journey will take us to meet men and women whose names still echo through the centuries. Thales, Pythagoras, Anaximander, Plato, Aristotle, Hipparchus, Eratosthenes, Aristarchus, Ptolemy…

Their ideas will have a lasting impact on the way we think about the heavens. Some will be confirmed. Others will be discarded. All, however, will contribute to shaping one of the most extraordinary intellectual adventures in history.

In the next episode, we shall meet the man whom many consider to be the first great scholar of ancient Greece: Thales of Miletus. A mathematician, philosopher, geometer and observer of the sky, he embodies the moment when humankind began to seek, beyond visible phenomena, the laws that govern nature.

Episode 2 Thales of Miletus: the man who sought to understand the heavens

In the 6th century BCE, on the shores of the Aegean Sea, a small Greek city was to witness the birth of a man whose name would live on through the centuries. His name was Thales of Miletus. Even today, he is often regarded as one of the first philosophers in Western history. He was also a mathematician, a geometer, an engineer, an observer of nature and, in a sense, one of the first thinkers to seek rational explanations for the phenomena of the world. Before him, mythological tales played a central role in explaining nature. Storms, eclipses, earthquakes and the movements of the stars were generally understood as the work of the gods. These stories gave meaning to the world and formed an integral part of the culture of ancient peoples.

Thales did not outright reject this heritage. But he posed a new question: do natural phenomena obey laws that human intelligence can discover?

This question marked a major turning point in the history of thought. It was no longer simply a matter of observation. It was a matter of understanding.

Thales probably travelled to Egypt and no doubt had contact with knowledge from Mesopotamia. Historians still debate the true extent of these influences, but one thing seems certain: he lived in an era when exchanges between Mediterranean civilisations were particularly intense.

His genius perhaps lay not in the knowledge he possessed, but in the way he used it. Instead of accumulating

observations as isolated facts, he sought the general principles that linked them.

Tradition attributes a famous feat to him. According to several ancient authors, Thales is said to have predicted a solar eclipse that occurred in 585 BCE. This eclipse is said to have interrupted a battle between the Medes and the Lydians, bringing about an unexpected peace.

The story is fascinating. But modern historians remain cautious. We do not know whether Thales actually predicted this eclipse with precision. It is possible that he was simply familiar with certain astronomical cycles passed down by the Babylonians and that he announced the possibility of an eclipse at a given time, without being able to specify the exact day or location.

Be that as it may, this anecdote illustrates a key idea. The Greeks were beginning to believe that celestial phenomena were not a matter of chance. They could be studied. They followed patterns. They became comprehensible. This conviction was to have an immense influence on the entire history of science.

Thales is also famous for his work in geometry. Several theorems still bear his name, although their exact attribution is sometimes disputed. His research shows that mathematics can be used to describe certain properties of the world with remarkable precision.

This idea would profoundly influence astronomers in the centuries that followed.

If geometry enables us to understand the Earth, why should it not also enable us to understand the heavens?

This question would henceforth run through the entire history of Greek astronomy.

It is interesting to note that Thales did not separate disciplines as we do today. For him, studying nature, measuring distances, observing the stars, reflecting on matter or solving a geometric problem were all part of the same intellectual endeavour: understanding the world. This unity of knowledge characterised the whole of early Greek philosophy.
Specialists did not yet seek to become solely astronomers, solely mathematicians or solely philosophers. They explored the whole of reality.
It is undoubtedly this universal curiosity that constitutes their greatest legacy. Thales did not found astronomy.
He did not invent astrology. But he helped to transform the way nature was viewed. Thanks to him and several of his contemporaries, celestial phenomena gradually ceased to be merely observed. They became questions. And every question now called for research, a proof, an explanation. A new way of thinking had just been born.
In the next episode, we shall meet another equally fascinating figure: Pythagoras. With him, numbers, proportions and harmony would become the keys to understanding the cosmos. His influence on astronomy, philosophy and, later, on astrology would be immense and would be felt for over two thousand years.

Episode 3 Pythagoras: when the Universe became harmony

Whilst Thales had paved the way for a rational understanding of nature, another thinker was to propose an even more ambitious idea. What if the entire Universe were constructed according to a mathematical harmony?

This insight is associated with one of the most famous figures of antiquity: Pythagoras of Samos.

Born around 570 BCE, Pythagoras remains a figure shrouded in mystery. He probably travelled to Egypt, and according to some traditions perhaps as far as Babylonia, before founding a philosophical community in the city of Croton, in what is now southern Italy.

Ultimately, we know very little for certain about his life. Most of the texts concerning him were written several centuries after his death. Historians therefore exercise caution in distinguishing what is likely to have originated with Pythagoras himself from what stems from the developments of the Pythagorean school.

This caution in no way detracts from the importance of his legacy. For the Pythagoreans, numbers were not merely tools for counting. They expressed the profound structure of reality. The world seemed organised according to proportions, relationships and regularities that mathematics made it possible to reveal. Music provided a magnificent illustration of this idea.

By studying vibrating strings, the Pythagoreans discovered that the most pleasing musical intervals corresponded to simple numerical ratios. A string half the length produced a note an octave higher. Other ratios gave rise to the fifth or the fourth.

Musical harmony thus appeared to be a direct consequence of numbers. Why should it not be the same for the Universe?

The Pythagoreans therefore imagined that the celestial bodies themselves obeyed comparable proportions. They developed an idea that would leave a lasting mark on the history of thought: that of the ‘harmony of the spheres’.

According to this conception, the movements of the celestial bodies were part of a perfect order, comparable to an immense cosmic music. This harmony was not necessarily audible to human ears. Above all, it expressed the idea that the cosmos formed a coherent whole, governed by harmonious laws. This vision held a considerable fascination.

For over two thousand years, philosophers, astronomers, theologians and artists drew inspiration from this image of a universe ordered according to mathematical principles. Even Johannes Kepler, in the 17th century, continued to seek out these harmonies in the movements of the planets.

The Pythagoreans also introduced another important idea. For them, the heavens were not merely to be observed; they were to be contemplated as the expression of a higher order. Astronomy thus became much more than a practical discipline intended to establish a calendar. It formed part of a reflection on humanity's place in the cosmos.

However, we must avoid a misunderstanding. The Pythagoreans did not yet possess the astronomical knowledge we have today. Their conception of the Universe differed profoundly from our own. Some of their ideas would be confirmed, others discarded, and still others profoundly transformed over the centuries. But their fundamental intuition remains remarkable.

They were among the first to assert that the universe possessed intelligibility. In other words, the world could be understood because it was organised according to principles accessible to reason. This confidence in the order of the cosmos would influence the whole of Greek philosophy. It would pave the way for the works of Plato, Aristotle, and subsequently numerous astronomers who

would seek to describe the movements of the stars with ever-greater precision. It would also exert a profound influence on the history of astrology. The idea that celestial configurations express a coherent order found a particularly fertile philosophical framework in Pythagorean thought, even though astrological techniques would continue to develop primarily from the Mesopotamian heritage. Pythagoras' work ultimately reminds us of an idea that remains relevant today. Observing the sky is not merely a matter of accumulating knowledge. It also involves reflecting on the order of the world, on the beauty of natural laws, and on the extraordinary coherence that seems to link even the most distant phenomena. This quest for harmony would henceforth accompany the entire history of science.
In the next episode, we shall meet another major thinker of ancient Greece: Plato. With him, the heavens will become the very model of perfection, and the study of the stars will take centre stage in the philosopher's education.

Episode 4 Plato: the heavens as a school of thought

When we think of Plato, we often think of his philosophical dialogues, his teacher Socrates, or even the famous allegory of the cave. Yet the heavens also occupy a central place in his work.
For Plato, observing the stars was not merely a matter of satisfying scientific curiosity. It was a way of cultivating the intellect.
Born in Athens around 428 BCE, Plato lived in an era when astronomical knowledge from Mesopotamia

intersected with Greek philosophical thought. The movements of the Sun, the Moon and the planets were already well known to observers. But one question remained unanswered: what do these movements teach us about the nature of the world?

Plato's answer goes far beyond astronomy. In several of his dialogues, notably the *Timaeus*, he presents the cosmos as an ordered, intelligible and harmonious whole. The sky is not merely a backdrop suspended above our heads. It is the visible expression of an order that invites human beings to reflect.

This idea was to exert a considerable influence. For Plato, the stars perform regular movements that contrast with the constant turmoil of human life. Whilst our lives are marked by passions, conflicts and uncertainties, the heavens seem to display remarkable stability.

The philosopher is therefore invited to turn his gaze towards this order. Not to flee the Earth, but to learn to think with greater rigour and harmony. This conception explains why astronomy occupies an important place in the curriculum of the Academy, the school founded by Plato in Athens.

The study of numbers, geometry and celestial movements is not merely a specialisation. It contributes to the formation of the mind. Understanding the regularities of the cosmos helps to develop a way of thinking capable of seeking order beyond appearances.

Plato did not merely admire the observations accumulated by astronomers; he also set them a challenge. The movements of the planets sometimes appear complex, irregular, or even baffling. Yet, if the cosmos is truly ordered, these irregularities may be merely apparent.

There must be a deeper explanation. This intuition would guide several generations of scholars. Astronomers would henceforth seek to construct models capable of accounting for the observed trajectories whilst preserving the idea of a harmonious universe.

Plato's influence therefore does not lie in any particular astronomical discoveries. It stems from a new way of framing problems. The heavens become an intellectual enigma.

It was no longer enough simply to observe phenomena. One had to seek out the principles that made them comprehensible. This approach would exert a lasting influence on the entire history of science. It would inspire, in particular, Eudoxus of Cnidus, who attempted to represent planetary movements using concentric spheres, and later Aristotle, who developed a vast conception of the cosmos based on this quest for order. It is important to note, however, that Plato's conceptions differ profoundly from those of modern astronomy. He knew nothing of gravity, nor of the true dimensions of the solar system, nor of the Earth's actual place in the universe. His reflections belong to a different era.

But their significance far exceeded the knowledge available at the time. Plato reminds us that an observation only reveals its full richness when accompanied by questioning. Why are things the way they are? Is there an order underlying what we perceive? How can we distinguish appearance from reality?

These questions would continue to occupy astronomers for more than two millennia. They would also shape the history of astrology, which, too, would often seek to understand what celestial configurations might reveal

about the order of the world. Even today, gazing at the sky still raises these same questions. The answers have changed profoundly since antiquity. Telescopes, satellites and space probes reveal a universe that Plato could never have imagined. Yet his intuition remains surprisingly relevant today: the sky is not merely an object of observation. It is also a constant invitation to reflect.
In the next episode, we shall meet Aristotle. A disciple of Plato, he developed a vision of the cosmos that would dominate Western thought for nearly two thousand years and profoundly influence both astronomy and astrology.

Episode 5: Aristotle: the perfectly ordered cosmos

When Plato died in 348 BCE, one of his former students continued a line of thought that would leave a profound mark on the history of philosophy. His name was Aristotle. Unlike his teacher, Aristotle did not confine himself to pondering grand ideas. He observed plants, animals and natural phenomena, and studied logic, politics, biology, physics and, of course, the heavens. His ambition was immense: to construct a coherent explanation of the entire Universe.
To understand his work, we must set aside our modern knowledge for a moment. In his day, no one had a telescope. The planets were still merely points of light moving slowly across the celestial vault. The stars appeared motionless. The Sun and the Moon visibly revolved round the Earth. Daily observation therefore seemed to lead to an obvious conclusion. The Earth appeared to be stationary. It was on this impression that

Aristotle built his model. At the centre of the Universe lay the Earth, stationary and spherical. Arranged around it were transparent spheres carrying the Moon, the Sun, the planets and, finally, the fixed stars. Each sphere revolved with perfect regularity, giving rise to the movements observed in the sky.

Today, we know that this representation is inaccurate. Yet it possessed remarkable internal consistency. It explained why the stars always seem to remain in the same positions, why the planets follow specific trajectories, and why the sky exhibits a stability that observers noted every night.

Aristotle also introduced a fundamental distinction between two worlds. Beneath the Moon's orbit lies the earthly world. This is the realm of change, of birth and of death. Plants grow and then die. Animals are born and then die. Mountains erode, rivers change course, and the seasons follow one another. Everything is in motion. Above the Moon begins the celestial world.

According to Aristotle, this region is perfect, eternal and unchanging. The celestial bodies neither come into being nor perish. They ceaselessly perform the same circular movements, regarded as the most perfect imaginable. To explain this difference, Aristotle puts forward an original idea. The terrestrial world is said to be composed of four elements: earth, water, air and fire. The heavens, on the other hand, are said to consist of a fifth substance, distinct from all the others: ether, sometimes called 'quintessence'. This celestial matter, incorruptible and eternal, would explain the perfection of the stars' movements. This conception would profoundly influence all of Western thought. For nearly twenty centuries, philosophers, astronomers and theologians would widely adopt this

distinction between an earthly world subject to change and a heavens regarded as perfect. Even when certain observations seemed to contradict this view, it remained extraordinarily influential.

Aristotle's contribution lies not only in his model of the cosmos. He also developed a method of reasoning based on logic, classification and the search for causes. For him, understanding a phenomenon was not simply a matter of describing it. One must explain why it exists and why it behaves in this way. This intellectual rigour would leave a lasting mark on the sciences. It would inspire astronomers, who would henceforth seek to construct ever more precise models of celestial movements. It would also exert a considerable influence on astrology. As the heavens were regarded as a perfect order, it became natural, in ancient thought, to attribute an exemplary value to them. This idea would help to reinforce the importance attached to celestial configurations in many astrological traditions. It should be noted, however, that several elements of the Aristotelian system would gradually be called into question.

From the Renaissance onwards, the observations of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler and Newton would show that the Earth does not occupy the centre of the Universe, that the planets revolve round the Sun, and that celestial bodies are not made of a substance different from that of our world. However, it would be unfair to judge Aristotle in the light of our current knowledge. His work represents one of the first attempts to offer a comprehensive, coherent and rational view of the cosmos. It bears witness to an exceptional intellectual ambition: to understand the Universe as a whole. For nearly two thousand years, this

view would serve as the framework for astronomical thought.
But the Greek astronomers would not stop there. Very soon, some of them realised that the movements of the planets were more complex than the model of perfect spheres would suggest. They therefore sought new solutions. Among them was a scholar who would revolutionise the way the heavens were measured: Hipparchus. It is to him that we shall devote our next episode.

Episode 6 Hipparchus: the man who measured the stars

Ever since the earliest observers in Mesopotamia, astronomical knowledge has continued to grow. The Babylonians had discovered the major cycles of the planets, learnt to predict eclipses and compiled exceptional records. The Greek philosophers, for their part, had sought to understand the principles governing the cosmos. With Hipparchus, a new era began. Astronomy became a science of measurement.
Born around 190 BCE, probably in Nicaea, in Asia Minor, Hipparchus worked mainly on the island of Rhodes. Very few of his writings have survived, but ancient authors, particularly Ptolemy, bear witness to the immense admiration they held for him. This recognition is by no means exaggerated.
Hipparchus profoundly transformed the way the sky was studied. Until then, astronomers had been primarily interested in the general movements of the celestial bodies. Hipparchus now sought to determine their positions with

the greatest possible precision. To this end, he compiled what is probably the first major catalogue of stars. In it, he catalogued several hundred stars visible to the naked eye, noting their positions on the celestial sphere. This undertaking represented a colossal task. Each star had to be observed, compared with the others and carefully located. The instruments remained rudimentary by our modern standards, but the demand for precision was already remarkable.

Hipparchus also introduced a concept that has since become familiar to us. He classified the stars according to their apparent brightness. The brightest belong to the first magnitude. The fainter ones are placed in lower categories. This classification was later adopted and refined, and remains the basis of the magnitude system used by astronomers today.

But his most famous discovery is undoubtedly the precession of the equinoxes. By comparing his observations with much older measurements made by Babylonian astronomers, Hipparchus noticed an unexpected phenomenon. The positions of the stars no longer correspond exactly. Very slowly, over the centuries, the entire sky appears to have shifted. He then realised that the points where the Sun crosses the celestial equator during the equinoxes are gradually shifting amongst the stars. We now know that this phenomenon is due to a slow movement of the Earth's axis of rotation, comparable to that of a wobbling spinning top. A complete cycle takes around twenty-six thousand years. Hipparchus was, of course, unaware of this explanation. But his observation remains one of the most extraordinary discoveries in ancient al astronomy. It shows that even the stars, which

were believed to be immutable, can reveal movements when observed over sufficiently long periods. This discovery would later exert a considerable influence on astrology. It would gradually lead to the distinction between two ways of defining the zodiac: the sidereal zodiac, based on the constellations, and the tropical zodiac, based on the seasons and the equinoxes. This distinction would become one of the great debates in the history of astrology. But we are not there yet.

Hipparchus also made significant improvements to trigonometry, a discipline essential for measuring the positions of celestial bodies. Thanks to his methods, astronomers were able to calculate angular distances with a precision that had never before been achieved. The sky gradually became a vast map. Every star now had a specific position. Every planet could be tracked with greater accuracy.

Astronomy was entering a new phase. Observation was no longer enough. It was necessary to measure, compare, calculate and verify. This scientific rigour would make Hipparchus one of the foremost authorities for all astronomers of the ancient world. His work would serve as the direct foundation for the work of another great scholar.

Nearly three centuries later, in Alexandria, Claudius Ptolemy would compile the astronomical knowledge of his time into a monumental work that would dominate Western thought for nearly fifteen centuries.

Before turning to this exceptional work, however, we shall take an important detour. We shall set out to discover the greatest library of the ancient world, that of Alexandria – a veritable crossroads where the knowledge from

Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece converged to give rise to one of the most extraordinary intellectual adventures in history.

Episode 7: Alexandria: the world capital of knowledge

In the 3rd century BCE, a city gradually established itself as the greatest intellectual centre in the Mediterranean world. That city was Alexandria.

Founded in 331 BCE by Alexander the Great on the shores of the Mediterranean, it quickly became much more than just a prosperous port. Under the rulers of the Ptolemaic dynasty, it attracted scholars from every corner of the known world. Mathematicians, doctors, geographers, philosophers, engineers, astronomers, grammarians and translators rubbed shoulders there on a daily basis. Never before had so much knowledge been gathered in one place.

When one thinks of Alexandria, one immediately thinks of its famous library. It more than lives up to its reputation. The Ptolemaic rulers harboured an extraordinary ambition: to gather together all the books in the world. Ships calling at the port were sometimes required to hand over their manuscripts so that they could be copied. The originals were kept in the library, whilst the copies were returned to their owners.

Whether entirely accurate or slightly embellished by tradition, this anecdote perfectly illustrates the spirit of Alexandria: to preserve knowledge, to enrich it, and to pass it on.

But the library was only one part of a much larger whole. At the heart of the city stood the Museum, or *Mouseîon*,

literally the ‘place dedicated to the Muses’. It was not a museum in the modern sense. It was a true research institution. Scholars lived there, taught there, exchanged ideas, compared their observations and worked together, sometimes for many years. One could almost compare it to a university or a major contemporary research institute. It was in this exceptional atmosphere that the legacies of several civilisations came together. The astronomical observations of Babylon. The calendars of Egypt. Greek geometry. Mathematics from various regions of the Mediterranean world. Alexandria thus became a vast intellectual laboratory.

This convergence of traditions profoundly transformed the study of the heavens. Astronomers were no longer dependent solely on observations made in their own city. They could compare centuries of records from different cultures. Never before had astronomical knowledge been so greatly enriched.

Among the scholars who worked in Alexandria were some of the greatest names of antiquity. Euclid wrote **The Elements** there, a work that would serve as a reference in geometry for over two thousand years. Eratosthenes calculated the circumference of the Earth with remarkable precision by observing the shadows cast by the Sun. Aristarchus of Samos proposed, several centuries before Copernicus, that the Earth might revolve around the Sun – a hypothesis which, however, was not accepted by his contemporaries.

All these scholars shared the same ambition: to understand the world through observation, reasoning and mathematics. Astronomy naturally occupied a prominent place in this intellectual ferment. The Babylonian archives

were studied with great care. Greek geometric methods made it possible to develop ever more precise models. Observational instruments were gradually being refined. The sky became the subject of study with unprecedented precision. This extraordinary concentration of knowledge was to pave the way for the work of a man whose name would remain associated with astronomy for nearly fifteen centuries.

Claudius Ptolemy.

Based in Alexandria in the 2nd century AD, he built on several centuries of research and produced a monumental synthesis that would have a lasting influence on both astronomy and astrology.

But before we turn to his work, it is important to bear in mind one essential lesson. Great discoveries almost never arise in isolation. They are often the result of encounters, exchanges and the transmission of knowledge between cultures. Alexandria is probably the finest example of this in the whole of antiquity. By bringing together knowledge from Babylon, Egypt and Greece, this city enabled humanity to take a new step forward in its understanding of the heavens.

In the next episode, we shall meet Claudius Ptolemy. An astronomer, mathematician and geographer, he produced the greatest astronomical synthesis of the ancient world. His work would dominate scientific thought for nearly fifteen centuries and exert a considerable influence on the entire history of astrology.

Episode 8: Claudius Ptolemy: the man who mapped the cosmos

When Claudius Ptolemy began working in Alexandria in the 2nd century CE, several centuries of astronomical observations were already behind him.
The Babylonians had amassed vast archives. The Greeks had developed geometry and models of the cosmos. Hipparchus had measured the stars with remarkable precision. Yet an immense task remained: to bring this legacy together, to organise it, and to make it coherent. This is precisely what Ptolemy went on to achieve.
We actually know very little about his life. He probably lived between the years 100 and 170 AD and worked mainly in Alexandria, then one of the greatest intellectual centres of the ancient world. His most famous work is a monumental treatise on astronomy which subsequent generations would call **The Almagest**. Its original Greek title was **The Great Mathematical Composition**. The name **Almagest** would later derive from the Arabic translation **Al-Majisti**, meaning 'the Very Great'. This change of name alone sums up the exceptional destiny of this work. For nearly fifteen centuries, it would serve as the principal astronomical reference in the Mediterranean world, the Middle East and subsequently Europe.
What exactly does this work contain?
First and foremost, a vast synthesis.
Ptolemy brings together the observations inherited from his predecessors, particularly those of Hipparchus, supplements them with his own work, and constructs a geometric model designed to represent the apparent movements of the celestial bodies. He was not yet seeking

to describe the Universe as it really is. His aim was different. He wanted to construct a model capable of accurately predicting the positions of the Sun, the Moon and the planets.
To achieve this, he developed a complex system of circles known as deferents and epicycles.
Today, this model may seem strange. We know that the planets orbit the Sun according to the laws described by Kepler and Newton. But in the 2nd century, Ptolemy's system represented a remarkable achievement. It provided an explanation for the apparent retrograde motions of the planets, their variations in speed and their positions, with a degree of accuracy that was more than sufficient for the observations of the time. This success explains its longevity. The model works. For centuries, astronomers would continue to refine it without questioning its fundamental principle: a stationary Earth at the centre of the cosmos. It would therefore be unfair to regard Ptolemy as an astronomer who was 'in the wrong'. He constructed the best possible model based on the observations available to him. This is precisely how science progresses. Each era develops representations that reflect the knowledge at its disposal. As new observations emerge, these models evolve.
Ptolemy also excelled in another field: precision. His catalogue of stars drew heavily on the work of Hipparchus whilst updating it. He described more than a thousand stars spread across forty-eight constellations, which would serve as a reference for many centuries. This mapping of the sky would exert an immense influence. Arab astronomers preserved it, corrected it and subsequently passed it on to the medieval West. Ptolemy's work would

therefore never disappear completely. It would endure across civilisations.
Syrian, Arab and later Latin translators ensured that his work would endure through the centuries. Even Copernicus, who would challenge the geocentric model, was thoroughly familiar with **The Almagest**.
The history of science does not proceed by destruction. It progresses by building on the work of previous generations. Ptolemy's model would eventually be replaced. But his method would endure.
Observe with precision. Construct a coherent model. Test it against observations. Refine it as new facts emerge. This approach remains, even today, the basis of all scientific research.
In the history of astrology, Ptolemy's astronomical work is also of considerable importance. Serious astrology could not exist without a rigorous knowledge of the positions of the stars. By providing the tools necessary for celestial calculations, *the Almagest* was to become the astronomical foundation upon which his second major work would be based. For Ptolemy was not merely an astronomer. He was also an astrologer. In a treatise entitled **The Tetrabiblos**, he set out to compile and organise the astrological knowledge of his time with the same commitment to consistency that characterised his astronomical work.
This book was to exert a considerable influence for nearly eighteen centuries. It is this work that we shall explore in our next episode.

Episode 9 The Tetrabiblos: the book that shaped astrology for eighteen centuries

Having devoted a monumental work to astronomy with **The Almagest**, Claudius Ptolemy undertook a second, equally ambitious project. This time, it was no longer simply a matter of describing the movements of the stars. He sought to organise the astrological knowledge inherited from several centuries of Babylonian, Egyptian and Greek traditions. The result came to be known as *the Tetrabible*, literally 'the four books'.

Few works have exerted a comparable influence throughout the history of astrology. For nearly eighteen centuries, it served as a reference for generations of astrologers in both the Arab-Persian world and Europe. Its significance does not lie in the fact that it invented a new form of astrology. On the contrary. Ptolemy gathered, classified, discussed and organised an already ancient body of knowledge. His aim was to bring coherence to a set of practices that had gradually developed over the centuries. This approach closely resembled the one he had adopted in astronomy: observe, compare, organise, explain.

The *Tetrabiblos* is also distinguished by its tone. Unlike many older collections of omens, Ptolemy often sought to avoid making sweeping assertions. He emphasised that several factors influence the course of a person's life. Climate, education, customs, the circumstances of birth and living conditions also play a role. According to him, therefore, the observation of the heavens does not, on its own, constitute a sufficient explanation. This caution is worth emphasising. It shows that Ptolemy was aware of

the complexity of reality. Far from presenting astrology as an absolute mechanism, he recognises that any interpretation remains subject to numerous limitations.
The *Tetrabiblos* gradually sets out the main foundations of ancient astrology.
The qualities attributed to the planets.
The signs of the zodiac.
The aspects.
Planetary domiciles.
The relationships between the seasons and the elements.
The different types of celestial configurations.
Many of the concepts still taught today were first systematically presented in this work. It is, however, essential to place these concepts in their historical context. The categories used by Ptolemy reflect the scientific and philosophical knowledge of his time. They are based, in particular, on Aristotelian physics, the theory of the four elements and a geocentric conception of the cosmos. Several of these foundations were to undergo profound changes over the following centuries. This is precisely what makes the *Tetrabiblos* so fascinating. It is not a static text. It represents a major milestone in a history that would continue to evolve. Arab astrologers would comment on it at length. Medieval scholars would study it with passion. Renaissance humanists would rediscover it. Even modern astrological schools of thought would continue to engage with its legacy. Few books can boast such longevity. The *Tetrabible* has endured through the centuries because it offered a solid intellectual framework. It provided a common language for generations of astrologers from very different cultures. This does not mean that all its assertions

should be regarded as definitive today. Like any human work, it bears the mark of its era.
Since Ptolemy, our understanding of the Universe has undergone a profound transformation. New planets have been discovered. The solar system is now far vaster than we ever imagined. Physics, astronomy, psychology and the human sciences have profoundly reshaped our understanding of the world.
Each generation is thus invited to re-read the great texts in the light of new knowledge. The *Tetrabible* is no exception to this rule. Its importance lies not only in the answers it provides, but also in the questions it continues to raise.
How should we interpret celestial configurations?
How much importance should be placed on observation?
How can tradition be reconciled with new discoveries?
These questions have run through the entire history of astrology right up to the present day. Ptolemy's book therefore does not mark the culmination of this history; rather, it constitutes one of its most important starting points.
In the next episode, we shall see how the Roman Empire helped to spread this knowledge throughout the Mediterranean basin. Astrology would gradually move away from the scholarly circles of to reach an ever-wider audience, thus ushering in a new phase in its history.

Episode 10: When Rome Inherited the Greeks' Sky

As this third series draws to a close, one thing becomes clear. The Greeks did not invent the observation of the heavens. They inherited the knowledge accumulated over

centuries in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Their immense contribution lay in organising this knowledge, scrutinising it, constructing models capable of explaining the movements of the stars, and developing a philosophical language that would leave a lasting mark on all Western thought. But no knowledge remains alive unless it is passed on.

From the 2nd century BCE onwards, a new power gradually emerged around the Mediterranean: Rome. Within a few centuries, the Roman Republic and then the Roman Empire extended their influence across a vast territory, bringing together extremely diverse peoples, languages and traditions. With this expansion, ideas travelled too. The works of the Greek philosophers, treatises on astronomy and works on astrology now circulated across a region stretching from Britain to the banks of the Euphrates, from Egypt to the far reaches of Central Europe. This dissemination marked a decisive turning point. The Romans did not seek to replace Greek culture. On the contrary, they held it in the highest regard. The Roman elite learnt Greek, read the philosophers, attended the schools of Athens or the ‘ ’ of Alexandria, and drew heavily on the knowledge developed by their predecessors. Astronomy and astrology followed the same path. The names of the deities changed.

Zeus became Jupiter.

Hermes became Mercury.

Ares became Mars.

Aphrodite became Venus.

Cronus becomes Saturn.

But behind these new names lie largely the same observations of the heavens and the same intellectual

constructs. This continuity is often overlooked. When we speak today of Mars, Jupiter or Venus, we use Latin names. Yet much of their symbolism was developed long before Rome, in Mesopotamia and later in the Greek world.

The Romans played primarily the role of intermediaries. They disseminated this knowledge throughout their empire, encouraged its teaching and ensured its transmission over several centuries. This dissemination was accompanied by a significant development. Astrology gradually moved away from the major centres of learning to reach a much wider audience. Astrologers now practised in many cities across the Empire. They sometimes advised emperors, drew up horoscopes for private individuals and took part in a practice that was becoming increasingly widespread. This popularity, however, was not without controversy. Some philosophers welcomed astrology, whilst others criticised it. Several emperors wavered between fascination and mistrust.

At certain times, astrologers enjoyed great prestige. At others, they were expelled from Rome or subjected to close scrutiny.

These tensions show that astrology now occupied an important place in Roman society. It was no longer confined to temples or philosophical schools. It was becoming a widely shared cultural phenomenon.

Meanwhile, astronomers continued their observations. Ptolemy’s model remained the standard of reference. His calculations made it possible to draw up ever more accurate calendars and to predict the main celestial phenomena.

For several centuries, little was to challenge this view of the cosmos. Yet history was once again on the verge of change.

From the early centuries AD, the Roman Empire underwent profound political, religious and cultural transformations. A new religion, Christianity, gradually spread throughout the Mediterranean basin. Its development would profoundly alter perceptions of many ancient traditions, including astronomy and astrology. Some knowledge would be preserved. Other knowledge would be called into question. A few traditions would disappear, only to be revived several centuries later.

The history of ideas never follows a straight path. It goes through periods of flourishing, of being called into question, of being forgotten and of being rediscovered. That is precisely what makes it so fascinating.

Over three series, we have been on a remarkable journey.

From the earliest hunter-gatherers gazing up at the stars...

To the astronomers of Babylon recording their observations on clay tablets...

Then to the Greek philosophers and scholars seeking to understand the order of the cosmos...

The sky has remained the same. But humanity’s perspective has never ceased to evolve. Our journey is far from over.

In the next series, we will enter the Roman era and the early centuries of Christianity. We will discover how astrology became a popular practice, how it was received, discussed or contested by philosophers and the authorities, and how knowledge originating in Babylon would weather the upheavals of Late Antiquity before being reborn in other civilisations.

The story continues.

Season 4: Astrology in the Roman Empire

Episode 1: When Rome Became Fascinated by Astrologers

At the start of our journey, observing the heavens was the preserve of a handful of Mesopotamian priests scrutinising the stars from temples and ziggurats.
A few centuries later, in the Greek world, philosophers and astronomers sought to understand the order of the cosmos.
With the Roman Empire, a new chapter began. Astrology gradually moved away from scholarly circles and into everyday life.
In the 1st century BCE and throughout the early centuries of the Empire, it enjoyed remarkable success. Astrologers set up shop in major cities, offering their services to private individuals, sometimes advising the powerful and answering a wide variety of questions.
When should one set off on a journey?
Is a project likely to succeed?
What does the future hold for a child?
What marriage should one enter into?
These questions cut across all strata of society. Astrology gradually became a familiar practice. Historians have access to numerous accounts demonstrating its extraordinary prevalence. Literary texts refer to astrological consultations. Inscriptions mention practitioners. Papyri discovered in Egypt contain astrological charts, calculations and technical manuals.
Far from being a marginal practice, astrology was now an integral part of the Empire’s cultural landscape. Why was it so successful?

Several reasons can be put forward. The Roman Empire was vast. People travelled extensively. Trade links connected regions far apart. Populations came into contact, traditions intermingled, and knowledge circulated more easily than ever before. Knowledge from Babylon, Egypt and Greece thus found a vast arena in which to spread.

Added to this was another reality. Life remained profoundly uncertain. Wars, epidemics, famines, accidents and political crises regularly punctuated people's lives. In such a context, many sought to better understand the events they were experiencing and to find their bearings in an often unpredictable world.

Astrology thus emerged as one of the many answers offered by ancient culture. It would, however, be wrong to imagine a uniform practice. Not all astrologers worked in the same way. Some had a solid grounding in astronomy and mathematics.

Others make do with simplified formulas aimed at a less discerning clientele.

As in many other fields, the quality varies considerably depending on the practitioner. This diversity also explains the criticism that is beginning to emerge.

Several philosophers have denounced the excesses of certain astrologers. They criticise some for promising certainties that are impossible to deliver or for exploiting their clients' anxieties.

This criticism is not always directed at astrology as a whole. Above all, it serves as a reminder that a highly popular discipline inevitably attracts practices of varying degrees of seriousness.

The Roman authorities themselves adopted a shifting stance. Some emperors readily consulted astrologers. Others were deeply suspicious of them.
Why this concern?
Because the questions put to astrologers do not solely concern private life. Sometimes people seek to know the length of an emperor's reign, the date of his death or the identity of his successor. In a political system where power is sometimes fragile, such predictions can quickly become matters of state.
Several emperors then took steps to control or restrict certain astrological consultations.
The bans never lasted very long.
Public interest remained too strong.
Astrology continued to flourish throughout the Empire. This exceptional success shows just how important the heavens were in ancient culture. Observing the stars was no longer the preserve of scholars alone. The language of the heavens had become familiar to a large part of the population. It was against this backdrop that several remarkable figures emerged. Famous astrologers. Emperors fascinated by horoscopes. Philosophers who were either in favour of or opposed to the practice. Stories that are sometimes surprising, sometimes dramatic. Our journey now takes on a much more human dimension.
In the next episode, we shall meet one of the most fascinating figures of this era: Emperor Tiberius. His interest in astrology, his relationships with astrologers and the decisions he would take regarding them perfectly illustrate the complex links between power and the heavens in Imperial Rome.

Episode 2: Tiberius: the emperor who put astrologers to the test

In the 1st century AD, the Roman Empire was at its height. Roads linked thousands of kilometres of territory. Goods were moving from one province to another. Ideas travelled with merchants, soldiers, scholars… and astrologers. Never before had astrology enjoyed such popularity. But this popularity also worried those in power. For one question kept recurring.

Who will be the next emperor?

In Rome, this question was no trivial matter. Predicting the death of a ruler or announcing the arrival of a successor could be interpreted as a political threat. A mere rumour was sometimes capable of triggering plots or fuelling dangerous ambitions.

It is against this backdrop that the figure of Tiberius emerges. As Augustus's successor, he reigned from the year 14 to the year 37 AD. Ancient authors describe him as a cautious, reserved man, at times suspicious, even deeply secretive.

Among the many accounts surrounding his reign, several relate to astrology. According to Suetonius, Tiberius took a personal interest in astrological calculations.

During his stay on the island of Capri, he is said to have received numerous astrologers eager to demonstrate their expertise. But the emperor did not readily place his trust in them. A famous tradition recounts that he subjected his visitors to a strange test. Before consulting them in earnest, he would ask them to draw up their own horoscope or predict their own fate. If they failed or displayed obvious incompetence, their fate could become very perilous.

Some accounts even claim that impostors were thrown from the cliffs of Capri. This story is often repeated in works on ancient astrology. Should it be regarded as a historical fact? Caution is warranted. The main accounts come from authors writing several decades after Tiberius's death. They sometimes mix well-established facts with anecdotes intended to highlight the emperor's character. Modern historians therefore consider it difficult to verify the details of this account.

On the other hand, one point seems much more certain. Tiberius attached real importance to astrologers. In particular, he maintained a relationship with a famous astrologer named Thrasyllus of Mendes. Originally from Egypt, Thrasyllus was also a philosopher, grammarian and specialist in the works of Plato. He became one of the emperor's close advisers and enjoyed lasting influence at court. His presence shows that certain astrologers enjoyed genuine intellectual prestige. They were not merely soothsayers. Many were also well-versed in mathematics, astronomy, philosophy or literature.

This versatility is reminiscent of the great scholarly traditions inherited from Alexandria. During the reign of Tiberius, however, the authorities' attitude towards astrology remained ambivalent. The emperor consulted certain astrologers, but he also sought to control their activities. Several imperial edicts restricted consultations concerning the fate of the state or the imperial succession. The reason for this was simple. Astrology was becoming a political matter. A horoscope foretelling the downfall of an emperor could fuel the ambitions of a rival. A favourable prediction could bolster the prestige of a pretender to the throne. In an empire as vast as Rome, rumours spread

quickly. The authorities realised that certain predictions could influence behaviour long before events actually took place. Astrology thus acquired a new power. Not because it necessarily enabled one to know the future, but because people sometimes act on the basis of what they believe they have heard. This observation remains surprisingly relevant today. The images we form of the future can influence our present decisions. The Romans had already understood this.

The story of Tiberius thus shows us that astrology is no longer merely a scholarly discipline. It becomes a social and political phenomenon. It arouses the interest of emperors. It fuels conversation. It inspires both trust and mistrust. The heavens have now descended into the affairs of men.

In the next episode, we shall discover another major figure of this era: Marcus Manilius. With his work entitled **Astronomica**, he will offer one of the finest accounts of how the Romans perceived astrology, at the crossroads of poetry, philosophy and the observation of the heavens.

Episode 3: Vettius Valens – the astrologer who observed life

Whilst Claudius Ptolemy is often regarded as the great theorist of ancient astrology, Vettius Valens is undoubtedly its most remarkable practitioner. His work allows us to step into the workshop of a 2nd-century CE astrologer and discover how astrology was actually practised on a daily basis in the Roman Empire.

Probably born in Antioch, Syria, before settling in Alexandria, Vettius Valens lived in a world where

astrology had become extremely popular. Emperors consulted astrologers, merchants sought their advice before setting out on journeys, families wished to know their children's destinies, and the major cities were home to numerous astrologers whose reputations varied considerably.

Unlike Ptolemy, Valens did not seek, above all, to construct a philosophical system. His aim was much more practical. He wished to pass on practical knowledge, based on experience. His immense work, known as *the *Anthologies**, brings together hundreds of examples, astral themes and reflections drawn from several decades of practice.

This distinctive feature makes his account exceptional.

Through its pages, we discover a man who is not content merely to apply rules learnt from books. He compares charts, revisits certain interpretations, sometimes acknowledges his hesitations and demonstrates just how indispensable experience remains. This attitude lends his work a surprising modernity.

Valens regularly reminds us that a birth chart can never be reduced to a single indication. Each planet must be studied in relation to the others, each configuration must be considered within the context of the whole chart, and several clues must converge before an interpretation can be proposed. This quest for coherence contrasts with the simplified image we sometimes have of ancient astrology.

His book also teaches us a great deal about Roman society. The questions put to astrologers concern travel, marriages, inheritances, illnesses, careers, births, accidents, fortunes or changes in circumstances. Astrology accompanies the

major moments of life and is far more deeply embedded in everyday life than is often imagined.

It is interesting to note that Valens sometimes refers to his own difficulties. He recounts having experienced periods of failure, financial losses and disappointments. Far from presenting the astrologer as a man possessing absolute knowledge, he portrays a practitioner who continues to learn through experience. This humility stands in stark contrast to certain caricatures that we still encounter today.

Historians attach great value to his account. The *Anthologies* constitute one of the richest sources available to us for understanding the actual practice of astrology in antiquity. Thanks to them, we know which techniques were used, how consultations took place, and what concerns drove the men and women of that era.

It would, however, be mistaken to believe that all the methods described by Valens have remained unchanged to this day. Many were modified, expanded upon or abandoned over the centuries. His work remains, nonetheless, an irreplaceable historical document, because it shows us astrology in action rather than astrology in theory.

In reading Vettius Valens, we ultimately discover a man driven by the same curiosity as the earliest observers of the sky in Mesopotamia. Centuries have passed, calculations have been refined, and techniques have been developed, but the question remains the same: how can we understand the connections that the ancients perceived between the rhythms of the heavens and those of human life?

This question will run through the entire history of astrology. Each era will answer it in its own way, according to its knowledge, philosophy and worldview. It

is precisely this that makes this long history an ever-evolving intellectual adventure.
In our next episode, we shall meet another fascinating figure: Dorotheus of Sidon. His didactic poem would have a lasting influence on astrologers across the Greek, Persian and Arab worlds, and would become one of the most widely circulated works of the entire ancient world.

Episode 4: Dorotheus of Sidon: the book that travelled through the centuries

The history of ideas sometimes holds surprising paradoxes. Some authors, who were very famous during their lifetimes, subsequently sink into oblivion. Others, though almost unknown to the general public today, have nevertheless exerted a considerable influence for over a millennium. Dorotheus of Sidon undoubtedly belongs to the latter category.
We know little about his life. Historians generally date his work to the 1st century AD, during the reign of Emperor Nero. A native of Sidon, a major port city on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, he lived in a world where Greek, Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Roman traditions intermingled on a daily basis. This cultural diversity left a profound mark on his work.
Dorotheus wrote a comprehensive astrological treatise in five books, presented in the form of a didactic poem. This choice may surprise the modern reader, but it reflects a widespread practice in antiquity. Before the widespread use of manuscripts and accessible libraries, poetry facilitated memorisation. The rhythm of the verses helped

students to retain teachings that were often highly technical.

His work does not seek to demonstrate a philosophical theory of the cosmos. It is presented, first and foremost, as a handbook for practitioners. In it, Dorotheos brings together the astrological knowledge of his time and organises it with remarkable clarity. The chapters cover births, marriage, children, the ‘ ’ travel, inheritances, professional activities, illnesses and even periods favourable for certain undertakings. We thus find the major concerns of daily life in the Roman Empire.

What strikes the reader when reading his work is his constant concern for method. Dorotheus does not merely set out rules. He emphasises the need to examine several factors before reaching a conclusion. A planetary configuration cannot be interpreted in isolation; it takes on its meaning within the context of the entire chart. This approach already demonstrates a desire to avoid excessive simplification.

The history of the book itself is almost as fascinating as its content. The original Greek text has virtually disappeared. For a long time, scholars believed the work to be lost. Yet it had continued its journey. First translated into Middle Persian during the Sassanid Empire, it was subsequently translated into Arabic. It is thanks to these translations, and later to the work of modern philologists, that much of its content has been reconstructed.

This journey perfectly illustrates the way in which knowledge circulated in antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Books did not always travel in their original form. They were copied, translated, adapted, sometimes summarised, and sometimes enriched with commentaries.

Each civilisation received a legacy which it transformed before passing it on in turn. Without the painstaking work of Persian and then Arab translators, a significant part of Greek astrology would probably have been lost.
Dorotheos also reminds us that a book can exert an influence far beyond its own era. For centuries, his teachings were studied, discussed and commented upon in regions far removed from his hometown. His name transcended political borders, changes in language and religious upheavals. Few ancient authors can claim such a lasting legacy.
It would, however, be inaccurate to regard his work as a definitive text. Like all the great treatises of antiquity, it reflects the knowledge available in his time. Techniques would evolve, new methods would emerge and interpretations would change over the centuries. Dorotheos's greatest significance lies precisely in the insight he offers us into a crucial stage of this evolution.
In the next episode, we shall meet another major author of Late Antiquity: Firmicus Maternus. His extensive treatise, the **Mathesis**, will enable us to discover how astrology had undergone a profound transformation by the end of the Roman Empire, at a time when Christianity was gradually becoming the dominant religion.

Episode 5: Firmicus Maternus: Rome's last great astrological treatise

The history of astrology is inextricably linked to the broader course of history. Books, ideas and knowledge evolve in step with the civilisations that nurture them. Few figures illustrate this reality as well as Julius Firmicus

Maternus, author of one of the most important astrological treatises of Late Antiquity.

We are in the 4th century AD. The Roman Empire is undergoing a period of profound change. Ancient religious traditions are still very much alive, but Christianity, long persecuted, is now expanding rapidly. Following the Edict of Milan, promulgated by Emperor Constantine in 313, Christians were granted freedom of worship. A few decades later, during the reign of Theodosius I, Christianity became the official religion of the Empire. It was in this rapidly changing world that Firmicus Maternus lived.

Believed by most historians to have been from Sicily, a lawyer by training and a man of learning, he set about writing a comprehensive treatise entitled **Mathesis**. Comprising eight books, this work brings together an impressive body of astrological knowledge available in his time. The author quotes extensively from his predecessors, notably the Greek and Hellenistic traditions, whilst seeking to provide a manual that was as comprehensive as possible for practitioners of his time.

The **Mathesis** is distinguished by its encyclopaedic scope. Firmicus does not merely set out a few general rules. He examines in minute detail the planets, the signs of the zodiac, the houses, the aspects, the various celestial configurations, the techniques of interpretation and numerous examples intended to guide the astrologer. His work is now one of the principal sources for understanding the practice of astrology in Late Antiquity.

Reading this treatise, one realises just how much astrology had developed into a sophisticated discipline. Several centuries had passed since the first Babylonian

horoscopes. Methods had been refined, calculations perfected, classifications multiplied, and interpretations had become increasingly detailed. Firmicus drew on this entire tradition and produced one of the most comprehensive summaries of it that has come down to us in Latin.

But the author's life then took an unexpected turn.

A few years after composing the **Mathesis**, Firmicus Maternus converted to Christianity. He then wrote another work, entitled **De errore profanarum religionum** ('On the Error of Pagan Religions'), in which he vigorously criticised traditional cults and called on the emperors to support the new Christian faith.

This change has long puzzled historians.

Should we see this as a complete break with his previous convictions? A sincere spiritual evolution? An adaptation to the political and religious context of his time? The sources do not allow us to answer with certainty. What is certain, however, is that his journey reflects the profound transformations then sweeping through the Roman world.

This period also marked a turning point for astrology itself.

Early Christian writers adopted a wide range of positions. Some firmly rejected astrological practices, which they regarded as incompatible with human freedom and divine providence. Others distinguished between the astronomical study of the heavens and astrological interpretations. Debates became numerous and at times heated. Astrology gradually ceased to be a widely accepted field of knowledge, becoming instead a subject of controversy.

The **Mathesis** thus stands as a testament to a world on the verge of disappearing. It brings together the legacy of several centuries of Greco-Roman traditions at the very moment when a new religious and cultural vision was beginning to profoundly transform the Empire.
For historians, this work is of inestimable value. Without it, a significant part of ancient astrology would probably have been lost. It enables us to understand how astrologers of late antiquity worked, which methods they favoured, and what questions were most frequently put to them.
Finally, the story of Firmicus Maternus reminds us that no body of knowledge evolves in a vacuum. Scientific discoveries, cultural practices and systems of thought are always linked to the major political, philosophical and religious transformations of their time. Astrology is no exception. It accompanies the changes in the world, whilst being transformed by them itself.
In the next episode, we shall gradually move away from the final centuries of the Roman Empire to discover how the early Christian thinkers viewed astrology. Ranging from admiration for the order of the cosmos to criticism of determinism and reflections on human freedom, their debates would have a lasting influence on the fate of this discipline throughout the Middle Ages.

Episode 6 The early Christians and astrology: a more complex debate than one might imagine

When we talk about the early days of Christianity, one idea often comes up: that the early Christians rejected astrology outright, without any nuance. Yet this picture is too

simplistic. As is often the case in history, the reality is richer and more nuanced.

In the first centuries AD, the heavens continued to fascinate. Astronomers continued their observations, calendars remained indispensable to civil and religious life, and the movements of the Sun, the Moon and the planets were still studied with great attention. Christian writers in no way disputed the beauty of the cosmos. On the contrary, many saw it as one of the most beautiful manifestations of the Creator's wisdom.

The difficulty arises when one moves from observation to interpretation.

Several Christian thinkers have grappled with a fundamental question: if the stars entirely determine human actions, what becomes of freedom? What becomes of moral responsibility, merit, fault, or the ability to choose between good and evil?

These questions are not new.

The Greek philosophers themselves had already debated fate, necessity and free will. Christian authors took up these reflections, giving them new theological depth.

Among them was Origen. A great scholar of Alexandria, he carefully distinguished the marvellous order of the heavens from the idea that every human act is dictated by the starry . For him, creation reveals a harmony willed by God, but this harmony does not abolish personal freedom.

A few decades later, Augustine of Hippo developed a critique that has since become famous. In his **Confessions** and later in **The City of God**, he recounts how he was drawn to astrology in his youth before gradually turning away from it. One of his arguments is based on the observation of twins. Two children may be

born at almost the same moment and yet lead very different lives. How can these differences be explained if destiny is determined solely by the position of the stars? This line of thought would have a lasting impact on Christian thought.

It is, however, important not to caricature their position. Augustine does not reject astronomy. He admires the knowledge that enables us to predict eclipses, calculate the seasons or understand celestial movements. What he criticises is the claim to be able to deduce with certainty a person's moral destiny from their birth chart.

This distinction would play a significant role in the centuries that followed.

Gradually, astronomy and astrology would begin to follow increasingly distinct paths, although they would remain closely linked for a long time to come.

It would also be wrong to imagine that the early Church held a uniform position on the matter.

There were numerous Christian communities scattered throughout the Empire, and their sensibilities differed. Some authors took a very harsh line against astrological ' ', whilst others focused primarily on divination practices which they deemed incompatible with their faith. The debates remained open for several centuries.

Meanwhile, however, astrology continued to be practised. Emperors would occasionally consult it in secret, private individuals continued to request horoscopes, and several schools carried on teaching it. Theological criticism was therefore not enough to eradicate a tradition that was already several centuries old.

This period is fascinating because it shows that major cultural transformations never instantly replace old ideas.

Rather, they open up a dialogue – sometimes a conflictual one – between different world views.
Astrology thus entered a new phase in its history.
It was no longer discussed solely by astronomers and philosophers.
It also became a subject of reflection for theologians.
These exchanges, which were at times heated, would go on to shape, for the long term, the way in which the West would view the relationship between the heavens, nature and human freedom.
Whilst these debates were taking place in the Mediterranean world, other events were unfolding in the East. In a few centuries' time, a vast translation movement would enable Arab-Persian scholars to collect, study and enrich the scientific heritage of Greece and Rome. Without this extraordinary endeavour to pass on knowledge, a great e of the works of Ptolemy, Dorotheus and Firmicus Maternus might well have been lost.
It is this new intellectual adventure that we shall begin to explore in our next episode.

Episode 7: The Fall of Rome: How Books Survived an Empire

In 476 AD, the last Western Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed. This event is often presented as the end of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the Middle Ages. However, like many famous dates, this one deserves to be put into perspective. People at the time did not feel as though their world had vanished overnight. Institutions often continued to function, towns remained

inhabited, trade did not cease immediately, and manuscripts continued to circulate slowly.

Nevertheless, a profound change was indeed underway.

Rome's political authority was gradually waning in the West. The former provinces became kingdoms ruled by different peoples, whilst administrative structures underwent transformation. In this sometimes unstable context, the great libraries declined, schools closed or were reorganised, and the copying of manuscripts became more difficult. The scientific works of Antiquity did not disappear suddenly, but their transmission became more precarious.

Fortunately, history does not end at Europe's borders.

In Constantinople, the new capital founded by Emperor Constantine in 330, the Roman Empire continued to exist. Historians now refer to it as the Byzantine Empire, although its inhabitants continued to regard themselves as Romans for a long time. The Greek language remained alive there, schools continued to teach, and much of the ancient literature continued to be copied.

Manuscripts thus played a vital role.

With each generation, scribes patiently reproduced the works of the great authors. This work required considerable attention to detail. A single error could alter a sentence, a calculation or a proper name. Copying a manuscript sometimes took several months' work. Thanks to this patience, the works of Plato, Aristotle, Hipparchus, Ptolemy and many other thinkers have survived the centuries.

This transmission, however, remains selective.

Not all books are copied. Some disappear forever. Others are known to us only through quotations or translations

produced several centuries later. The history of knowledge often depends as much on chance as on human agency. A fire, a war, an abandoned library or, conversely, a diligent monastery can determine the fate of a work.

Astronomy enjoys a special status.

Calculating the calendar, determining the date of Easter and observing celestial phenomena continue to arouse the interest of scholars. Astronomical texts are therefore regularly copied and studied. Astrology, on the other hand, faces a more mixed situation. Some manuscripts circulate discreetly in scholarly circles, whilst others arouse the suspicion of the religious authorities. Despite these reservations, the great ancient treatises continue to be read and commented on in several intellectual centres across the Empire.

Meanwhile, a new player emerged in the south and east of the Mediterranean.

In the 7th century, a period of unprecedented intellectual exchange began in the Arab-Persian world. Scholars gradually discovered the treasures of Greek thought preserved in Byzantium and in several cities of the Near East. Translators fluent in Greek, Syriac and Arabic undertook the immense task of transmitting this knowledge. This movement did not merely consist of copying ancient texts; it involved comparing them, discussing them, occasionally correcting them and enriching them with new observations.

Thus, astronomical and astrological knowledge did not survive the centuries simply because it remained static. It survived because generations of men and women chose to preserve it, study it and pass it on. Each era added its own brick to a structure begun long before its time.

In the next episode, we shall enter one of the most brilliant periods in the history of science. In Baghdad, an exceptional institution, the House of Wisdom, will bring together translators, mathematicians, physicians and astronomers from across the known world. Thanks to them, the legacy of antiquity will not merely be preserved: it will be profoundly renewed.

Episode 8 The House of Wisdom: when Baghdad became the world capital of science

At the start of the 9th century, the centre of gravity of knowledge gradually shifted away from the shores of the Mediterranean towards the East. A new capital now cast its influence over much of the known world: Baghdad.
Founded in 762 by the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mansur, the city experienced spectacular growth. Situated at the crossroads of trade routes linking Asia, Persia, India and the Mediterranean, it quickly became a hub not only for the movement of goods, but also for the exchange of ideas, books and scholars.
It was against this backdrop that an institution was established which would profoundly transform the history of science: the House of Wisdom, known in Arabic as *Bayt al-Hikma*.
Contrary to the image sometimes portrayed, it was not simply a library.
The House of Wisdom was at once a translation centre, an academy, a place of research and an intellectual observatory where scholars of different languages, cultures and religions came together. Muslims, Christians, Jews and, on occasion, Zoroastrians worked side by side

there towards a common goal: to understand and enrich knowledge.
One of the institution's first tasks was to translate the great works of antiquity.
The works of Aristotle, Euclid, Archimedes, Galen, Hipparchus and Ptolemy were gradually translated from Greek – often via Syriac – into Arabic. This work required exceptional al skill. Translators did not merely substitute one word for another. They had to understand the mathematical reasoning, philosophical concepts and subtleties of the original texts.
Among the most famous was Hunayn ibn Ishaq, whose translations helped to preserve a considerable portion of Greek scientific literature.
But to reduce the House of Wisdom to a mere translation workshop would be profoundly unfair.
The scholars of Baghdad did not merely copy the works of the ancients.
They checked their calculations.
They debated their hypotheses.
They corrected certain errors.
They made new observations.
They developed innovative methods.
The history of science then entered a new phase of creativity.
Among these researchers, Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi stands out. His name is the origin of the word 'algorithm', whilst his work on algebra brought about a lasting revolution in mathematics. For astronomers, these new computational tools represented a considerable advance.

Celestial observations also benefited from this momentum.
Increasingly accurate astronomical tables were compiled.
Instruments were refined.
The positions of the planets were recalculated.
The movements of the Moon were studied with a new level of precision.
Scholars no longer hesitated to question certain findings inherited from antiquity when their own observations led them to different conclusions.
Astrology naturally followed this trend.
The great Greek treatises were translated, annotated and expanded upon. Arab-Persian astrologers developed new techniques, refined certain calculations and produced a body of literature of exceptional richness that would exert a profound influence on the medieval West.
This period illustrates a fundamental truth of history.
Civilisations do not progress in isolation.
They draw inspiration from one another.
Mesopotamian knowledge had inspired the Greeks.
The Greeks had enriched the Babylonian legacy.
The Orent, in turn, took this knowledge, transformed it, and subsequently passed it on to the Latin West.
Each stage adds something new.
This unbroken chain of transmission constitutes one of humanity's finest intellectual adventures.
When we look up at the sky today, when we use so-called 'Arabic' numerals, when we solve an equation or consult a star chart, we are still benefiting, often without realising it, from this extraordinary period of creativity.
The House of Wisdom perfectly symbolises this spirit.

A place where curiosity transcends borders, where languages become bridges rather than barriers, and where knowledge travels from one civilisation to another.
In the next episode, we shall meet one of the greatest astronomers of that era: Al-Battani. Through the exceptional precision of his observations, he corrected several of Ptolemy's measurements and, several centuries later, paved the way for the work of Copernicus himself.

Episode 9: Al-Battani – the astronomer who corrected Ptolemy

When a great scholar publishes a work that remains authoritative for several centuries, one might think that his successors would simply copy it. The history of science shows exactly the opposite. The greatest researchers are often those who admire their predecessors whilst being willing to scrutinise their work with a fresh perspective. This is precisely what Al-Battani did.
Born around 858 in the Harran region of Upper Mesopotamia, Al-Battani grew up in a world where the sciences were undergoing exceptional development. Greek works had been translated, mathematics was advancing rapidly, observational instruments were becoming more precise, and astronomers now had access to several centuries' worth of measurements accumulated since the time of Babylon. This intellectual wealth provided an ideal environment for revisiting ancient works and testing them against new observations.
For many years, Al-Battani observed the sky with remarkable patience. Contrary to the romanticised image of the solitary astronomer gazing at the stars for a few

nights a year, his work required almost daily dedication. The positions of the Sun, the Moon and the planets were recorded, compared, verified and then checked against the calculations inherited from Ptolemy. This painstaking work eventually revealed several discrepancies.

Far from regarding these differences as errors of calculation, Al-Battani set about reworking the calculations from the very beginning. In particular, he improved the measurement of the length of the solar year, which he estimated with remarkable precision for his time. The discrepancy between his value and the modern measurement is only a few minutes. He also refined the value of the Earth's axial tilt and provided highly precise observations of the apparent movements of the Sun.

These results may seem technical. Yet they illustrate a decisive shift in scientific thought. Since the time of the Babylonians, observations of the sky had never ceased. With Al-Battani, they became precise enough to highlight the limitations of certain ancient models. This was not a matter of rejecting Ptolemy, but of continuing his work. Science progresses less through radical breaks than through continuous improvement.

Al-Battani also played a major role in the development of trigonometry. Whereas Greek astronomers had mainly used the chords of a circle, he generalised the use of sine, cosine and tangent functions, which considerably simplified astronomical calculations. These tools would become indispensable to all astronomers in the centuries that followed and were later transmitted to the Latin West.

His principal work, often referred to as *the Book of Astronomical Tables*, circulated widely throughout the Arab-Persian world before being translated into Latin in

the 12th century. European astronomers then discovered measurements that were more precise than those previously available to them. Several generations of scholars would draw on this work, including a young Polish canon named Nicolaus Copernicus, who explicitly cites Al-Battani in his own work.

This transmission of knowledge is fascinating. Observations made in a town in Upper Mesopotamia travelled several thousand kilometres, changed languages, spanned the centuries and, much later, contributed to the astronomical revolution of the Renaissance. Once again, history reminds us that great discoveries are rarely the work of a single man. They result from a long chain of researchers who read one another's work, correct one another and build upon one another's findings.

Astrology also benefits from these advances. The more precisely the positions of the stars are calculated, the more accurately astrological charts can be drawn up. Whatever interpretation is subsequently given to these configurations, it necessarily rests on as accurate a knowledge as possible of the observed sky. Advances in astronomy therefore directly benefit practitioners of astrology.

Finally, the example of Al-Battani teaches us a lesson that remains relevant today. Respecting the great masters of the past does not mean endlessly repeating their conclusions. On the contrary, it means continuing their approach: observing rigorously, verifying results, being willing to question certain certainties when the facts demand it, and passing on to future generations knowledge that is slightly more precise than that which we ourselves received.

In the next episode, we shall meet one of the most brilliant minds of the Arab-Persian world: Abu Rayhan al-Biruni. An astronomer, mathematician, geographer, historian of religions and remarkable observer of cultures, he will embody the ideal of the universal scholar and take the dialogue between the observation of the heavens and the understanding of the world even further.

Episode 10: Al-Biruni: the scholar who sought to understand the world

Throughout this fourth series, we have seen astronomical and astrological knowledge gradually leave the Roman Empire to experience a new heyday in the Arab-Persian world. The great Greek works were translated, observations were resumed with increasing precision, and mathematical methods were profoundly renewed. Yet one figure dominates this era through the exceptional breadth of his curiosity: Abu Rayhan al-Biruni.

Born in 973 in the Khwarezm region of Central Asia, Al-Biruni grew up in an environment where the sciences were undergoing remarkable development. From a very young age, he studied mathematics, astronomy, geometry, physics, geography, mineralogy, pharmacology, history, chronology and languages. His body of work bears witness to an almost boundless curiosity. Historians attribute more than a hundred works to him, several of which remain valuable sources today for understanding the scientific knowledge of his time.

What immediately strikes one about Al-Biruni is his method. He is never satisfied with a claim simply because it is old or widely accepted. He seeks to observe, measure,

compare and verify. When he studies a mountain, he measures its height. When he turns his attention to a city, he calculates its latitude. When he examined an astronomical theory, he tested it against available observations. This commitment to constant verification earned him an exceptional reputation amongst historians of science.

His astronomical research was extensive. He improved several methods for calculating celestial coordinates, studied eclipses, refined geographical measurements and took an interest in the Earth's rotation. Remarkably, he seriously considered the hypothesis that the Earth might rotate on its axis. He acknowledged, however, that no conclusive observations had yet been made to settle the matter. This caution was characteristic of his approach: he carefully distinguished between appealing hypotheses and conclusions that had actually been proven.

Al-Biruni was also fascinated by other civilisations. He accompanied expeditions to the Indian subcontinent and spent several years there. Rather than judging the traditions he encountered against his own frame of reference, he set about learning Sanskrit so that he could read the texts of Indian scholars directly. His famous work on India remains a model of intellectual openness. He strove to understand a culture before criticising it, an attitude that was particularly remarkable for his time.

This curiosity is evident in his approach to astronomy and astrology. Al-Biruni describes in detail the methods employed by different traditions, compares their calculations, notes their discrepancies and seeks to understand their foundations. He never confuses astronomical observation with astrological interpretations,

but he believes that the historian must faithfully present the ideas he is studying, even when he does not entirely share them.

Al-Biruni's work reminds us that the sciences do not progress solely through discoveries. They also advance through a method characterised by patience, precision and dialogue. Understanding a phenomenon often involves comparing several traditions, weighing up different points of view and accepting that certain questions may remain unanswered for the time being. His works were studied by numerous Arab-Persian scholars and then rediscovered in Europe several centuries later. Even today, historians regard him as one of the greatest scientific minds of the Middle Ages, not only for his achievements but also for his extraordinary intellectual honesty.

Our journey is far from over. The knowledge developed in the Arab-Persian world would soon cross the Mediterranean. Thanks to translators based in Spain, Sicily and several Italian cities, the great Greek and Arabic works would be rediscovered by the Latin West. A new period of intellectual ferment is beginning. It will gradually lead to the medieval universities, the great cathedrals, the first European observatories and, a few centuries later, to the Renaissance. It is this fascinating adventure that we shall explore in the next series.

Series 5: The Return of the Stars to the Medieval West

Episode 1 Toledo: the city where books changed Europe

As we have looked back over previous episodes, we have traced the long journey of astronomical and astrological knowledge from the plains of Mesopotamia to the great Arab-Persian centres of learning. We have seen scholars in Baghdad, Damascus and Khwarezm translating Greek works, enriching them with new observations and developing mathematical methods of remarkable precision. One question remains, however: how did this knowledge find its way back to Europe, where much of the ancient scientific literature had gradually fallen out of use? The answer leads to a Spanish city whose fate was to profoundly transform the history of science: Toledo.

When King Alfonso VI of Castile recaptured Toledo in 1085, the city already possessed a long intellectual tradition inherited from several centuries of Muslim presence. Its libraries contained Greek works translated into Arabic, commentaries by philosophers, and treatises on medicine, mathematics, geography, astronomy and astrology. This wealth of knowledge soon attracted scholars from all over Europe.

From the 12th century onwards, Toledo became one of the most extraordinary centres of translation in the Middle Ages. Teams comprising Christian, Jewish and Muslim scholars often worked together. The process was sometimes astonishing: a scholar would read an Arabic text and translate it orally into a Romance language; a

Latin scholar would then reformulate this text into scholarly Latin, the common language of European universities. This work required remarkable cooperation between people of different cultures, religions and languages.

Among the most famous of these translators was Gerard of Cremona. Born in Italy, he travelled to Toledo because he wished to consult a work he could find nowhere else in Europe: Ptolemy's **Almagest** . Once there, he discovered a library of exceptional richness and devoted several decades to translating nearly eighty scientific works. Thanks to his work, Europeans rediscovered Ptolemy, Al-Battani, Al-Khwarizmi, Galen, Aristotle and many other authors.

These translations had a considerable impact. Cathedral schools and, later, the first universities finally had access to texts that had in some cases been lost to Europe for several centuries. Mathematics was revitalised, astronomy regained a solid scientific foundation, and computational techniques advanced rapidly. Astrology, too, benefited from this intellectual renaissance. The great Greek and Arabic treatises were now accessible to Latin scholars, who commented on them, discussed them and taught them.

It would, however, be inaccurate to speak of a mere return to ancient knowledge. The works arriving in Toledo were no longer exactly those of ancient Greece. They had been translated, annotated, enriched and sometimes corrected by several generations of Arab-Persian scholars. When, in the Middle Ages, Europe rediscovered Aristotle or Ptolemy, it encountered them through the lens of centuries

of further reflection. This transmission was therefore also a transformation.
Toledo offers us a magnificent lesson in history. Great intellectual advances rarely arise in isolation. They emerge when different cultures agree to engage in dialogue, to test their ideas against one another and to share their knowledge. The city thus became a veritable crossroads where languages circulated as freely as concepts, and manuscripts as freely as people.
This effervescence marked the beginning of a vast scientific revival. The manuscripts copied in monastic scriptoria, studied in cathedral schools and then taught in universities would gradually shape a new generation of European scholars. A few centuries later, this dynamic would lead to the great discoveries of the Renaissance.
In the next episode, we shall meet Gerard of Cremona, the man who devoted his life to translating Arabic manuscripts into Latin, thereby enabling an entire civilisation to rediscover a vital part of its scientific heritage.

Episode 2: Gerard of Cremona: the man who set out in search of a book

Nowadays, it takes just a few seconds to look up an ancient book in a digital library. In the 12th century, the situation was quite different. Books were rare, copied by hand, sometimes unique, and certain texts – which were known to have existed – seemed to have disappeared from Europe centuries ago. For a passionate scholar, tracking down a manuscript could become a lifelong endeavour.
This was precisely the adventure experienced by Gerard of Cremona.

Born around 1114 in the Italian city of Cremona, Gerard of Cremona developed a passion for the sciences at a very early age. He studied mathematics, astronomy and philosophy, but one work was missing from his studies. Ancient authors often referred to an exceptional treatise by Claudius Ptolemy, **The Almagest**. Everyone was familiar with its reputation, but no Latin copy was available at the time in the schools where he was studying. Rather than give up, Gerard of Cremona took an extraordinary decision.

He left his homeland and set out on a long journey to Toledo, in Spain. The city, which had been recaptured by the Christian kingdoms a few decades earlier, still held a vast portion of the libraries established under Muslim rule. There he found hundreds of manuscripts written in Arabic, themselves derived from Greek translations or enriched by Arab-Persian scholars.

Upon arriving in Toledo, Gerard of Cremona discovered an intellectual world he had never imagined.

The libraries were brimming with works unknown in Europe. Mathematics, medicine, philosophy, geography, astronomy and astrology were all represented by hundreds of volumes. What was meant to be a simple research trip turned into a true calling.

However, one obstacle remained in his access to these treasures.

Gérard of Cremona did not yet have a sufficient command of Arabic. He therefore set about learning the language so that he could read the manuscripts directly. This choice is revealing of his character. He did not seek a ready-made translation; he wanted to understand the texts in their original language.

For several decades, he devoted himself to a task requiring exceptional patience.
Manuscript after manuscript, he translated into Latin the great works of antiquity and of Arab-Persian civilisation. Historians estimate that he produced nearly eighty translations, a considerable number for a single lifetime. Among them are Ptolemy's **Almagest**, several treatises by Aristotle, medical works by Galen and Avicenna, mathematical texts by Euclid, as well as numerous writings on astronomy and astrology.
His work went far beyond mere translation.
Every technical term had to be understood, and sometimes reinvented when no Latin equivalent existed. Mathematical reasoning had to be verified, numerical tables carefully copied, and geometric figures reproduced without error. A single copying error could alter a calculation or distort a proof.
Thanks to Gerard of Cremona, generations of European students were finally able to discover works that had almost vanished from their intellectual horizon. The fledgling universities now had access to an unrivalled body of scientific literature. Astronomers rediscovered the methods of Ptolemy and Al-Battani. Physicians rediscovered Galen and Avicenna. Philosophical s could at last read Aristotle in his entirety.
The story of Gerard of Cremona reminds us that great discoveries do not rely solely on researchers who observe the heavens or devise new theories. They also depend on those who pass on knowledge. Without translators, much of the scientific heritage of antiquity would have remained inaccessible to the medieval West.

His journey also shows that curiosity knows no bounds. In pursuit of knowledge, Gerard was willing to move to a different country, adopt a new language and adapt to a new cultural environment. He worked with scholars from diverse backgrounds, convinced that knowledge belongs to all of humanity. This open-mindedness is perhaps his greatest legacy.
In the next episode, we shall discover how these translated works left the libraries to find their way into the new medieval universities. In Paris, Bologna, Oxford and Montpellier, a generation of masters and students would go on to teach astronomy and astrology with a newfound rigour, paving the way for the great intellectual revolutions of the centuries to come.

Episode 3 The first universities: when knowledge finally found a home

The books translated in Toledo did not remain on library shelves for long. Very quickly, they began to circulate throughout Europe. Copied by hand and transported by merchants, clergy or student ‘ ’, they made their way to the major cities where an entirely new institution was emerging: the university.
Today, universities seem to us to be a matter of course. Yet they constitute one of the most original inventions of the European Middle Ages. From the end of the 11th century, and particularly during the 12th and 13th centuries, communities of teachers and students gradually took shape in Bologna, Paris, Oxford, Montpellier, Salamanca and several other European cities. Their ambition was simple

yet revolutionary: to make knowledge the subject of ongoing, organised teaching open to discussion.

These institutions did not yet resemble our modern universities. There were no sprawling campuses or lecture theatres. Lectures were often held in rooms lent by churches, private homes or municipal buildings. Students came from all over Europe to study under the most renowned masters. Everyone communicated in Latin, the common language of scholars, which enabled a young Englishman, Italian, Spaniard or German to study under the same professor.

The arrival of translations from Toledo profoundly transformed this form of education. The works of Aristotle, Ptolemy, Euclid, Al-Battani, Avicenna and many other authors provided the masters with a wealth of material previously unknown. Students discovered a worldview based on observation, logical reasoning and mathematical proofs. Europe thus rediscovered an essential part of the scientific heritage of n antiquity, enriched by several centuries of research carried out in the Arab-Persian world.

Astronomy quickly came to occupy an important place in this education. It formed part of *the quadrivium*, alongside arithmetic, geometry and music – that is, the four mathematical disciplines that complemented the liberal arts curriculum. Studying the heavens was not merely a matter of intellectual curiosity. Astronomical knowledge was essential for drawing up calendars, calculating the dates of religious festivals, determining the hours, improving navigation and understanding the organisation of the cosmos as it was conceived at the time.

Astrology is also present, but its status is more complex. At several universities, it is studied in close conjunction with astronomy, as a horoscope first and foremost requires a precise calculation of celestial positions. Some academics regard it as an application of astronomical knowledge. Others caution against overly categorical interpretations or any form of absolute determinism. Debates therefore continue within the educational institutions themselves.

This freedom of discussion was one of the great strengths of medieval universities. Ancient texts were not regarded as sacrosanct. They were read, commented on, compared and, at times, criticised. Students learnt to weigh up arguments, to distinguish between observations and hypotheses, and to seek intellectual coherence. This method, known as *disputatio*, was to become one of the hallmarks of university education for several centuries.

Student life was often very different from the peaceful image one might imagine. Young people would sometimes travel hundreds of kilometres to study under a renowned master. They lived modestly, copied their own books, attended long public lectures and took part in passionate debates. Conflicts between students, local residents and the authorities were frequent. Some universities even experienced strikes or mass relocations to other towns when teaching conditions became difficult.

Through these institutions, a genuine European scientific community gradually emerged. Ideas now circulated more rapidly than ever before. A commentary written in Paris might be studied a few years later in Oxford, whilst a treatise composed in Bologna would soon find its way into the libraries of Prague or Cologne. Manuscripts travelled

ceaselessly, creating a vast intellectual network that extended far beyond political borders.

The earliest universities remind us that knowledge does not advance solely through discoveries. It also progresses through the places where men and women can pass it on, discuss it and challenge it. A library preserves books; a university gives them a voice.

When we look today at Europe's oldest universities, we see above all magnificent stone buildings. But their true wealth lay elsewhere. It lay in the daily encounters between teachers, students and manuscripts from every known civilisation. It was there that the great intellectual revolution which was to transform Europe a few centuries later was taking shape, often without their contemporaries realising it.

In the next episode, we shall meet Roger Bacon. Convinced that observation and experience should complement the authority of ancient texts, he would blaze a new trail that, in some respects, already foreshadowed the modern scientific method.

Episode 4 Roger Bacon: when experience joined the books

For centuries, European scholars had devoted much of their energy to tracking down the lost works of antiquity, translating them, copying them and teaching them. This immense undertaking had led to the rediscovery of Aristotle, Ptolemy, Euclid, Al-Battani, Avicenna and many other authors. Yet, in the 13th century, a new question began to emerge: are books, however precious they may be, enough to understand the world?

Among those who dared to ask this question was Roger Bacon. Born around 1214 in England, he studied at Oxford and then in Paris, the two greatest intellectual centres of his time. There he discovered the works of the Greek philosophers, translations from the Arab-Persian world and the rigorous methods of university teaching. But he soon became convinced that knowledge could not progress through reading and commentary alone.

For Roger Bacon, the authority of the ancients deserved respect, but it never exempted one from verifying their claims. A demonstration gains value when it is tested against observation, and a theory becomes more robust when it withstands experimentation. This idea seems natural to us today. In the 13th century, however, it represented a profoundly innovative approach to the sciences.

Bacon took an interest in a wide variety of fields. Mathematics, optics, astronomy, languages, geography, philosophy and even certain aspects of chemistry held his attention. This universal curiosity is reminiscent of that of Al-Biruni a few centuries earlier. Like him, he believed that all disciplines could shed light on one another and that the search for truth required constant openness.

Astronomy played a significant role in his thinking. Bacon believed that the precise study of celestial movements was essential for establishing calendars, understanding the seasons and organising religious life. He was also interested in observational instruments and emphasised the need to improve calculation methods in order to obtain more reliable results.

His view of astrology is more nuanced than is often thought. He does not reject outright the astrological

traditions inherited from antiquity, but he is highly critical of simplistic interpretations and predictions presented as certain. For him, any discipline based on the observation of the heavens must first and foremost be grounded in rigorous astronomy. He also points out that human phenomena are too complex to be reduced to a single explanation.

This caution is characteristic of his intellectual approach. Bacon rejects easy certainties. He prefers to acknowledge the limits of knowledge rather than assert more than the facts allow. This attitude sometimes leads to him being misunderstood. Some of his ideas are deemed bold, and he experiences several difficult periods within his religious order. Historians still debate the exact reasons for these tensions, but they bear witness to the challenges faced by thinkers seeking to renew the methods of their time.

Roger Bacon's influence lies not only in the results of his research. It lies above all in his mindset. He encouraged scholars to learn ancient languages so as to consult the texts directly, to observe nature with precision, to use mathematics to describe phenomena, and to test theories through experimentation wherever possible. In many respects, this method foreshadowed the one that would develop much more widely from the Renaissance onwards.

It would, however, be wrong to regard him as a modern scientist ahead of his time. Bacon remains a man of the Middle Ages. His intellectual world remains deeply shaped by Aristotelian philosophy, Christian theology and the knowledge available in the 13th century. Yet he understood that knowledge cannot remain static. Each generation must take up the work of its predecessors,

examine it carefully and enrich it through new observations.
Finally, the story of Roger Bacon reminds us that the greatest intellectual revolutions often begin with a very simple question: ‘How do we know this?’ This question runs through the entire history of the sciences. It leads us to observe more closely, to measure more precisely and to challenge inadequate explanations. It is this question that, a few centuries later, would enable new astronomers to profoundly transform our view of the sky.
In the next episode, we shall discover how medieval astronomers perfected their observational instruments. Astrolabes, quadrants, armillary spheres and astronomical clocks would enable the sky to be measured with ever-greater precision, paving the way for the extraordinary discoveries of the Renaissance.

Episode 5: The Instruments that Tamed the Sky

When we think of the great astronomers of Antiquity or the Middle Ages, we often picture men gazing up at the stars. This image is accurate, but it overlooks one essential element: between their eyes and the sky lay instruments of remarkable ingenuity. Long before the invention of the telescope, scholars had learnt to measure the positions of the stars with astonishing precision thanks to tools that had been patiently refined over the centuries.
The most famous of these is undoubtedly the astrolabe. Originating in the Greek world, considerably improved by Arab-Persian scholars and subsequently widely adopted in Europe, this fascinating instrument enables one to determine the time, measure the altitude of a celestial body

above the horizon, ascertain the latitude of a location, and even solve numerous astronomical problems. A true analogue computer ahead of its time, it served astronomers, navigators, geographers and even some travellers for nearly a e millennium.

Alongside it is the quadrant. Simpler in design, it enables the precise measurement of the angles formed by celestial bodies above the horizon. Its simplicity is its strength. Easy to make and transport, it became a faithful companion to observers wishing to compare their measurements across the seasons.

The armillary sphere is another masterpiece of human ingenuity. Comprising rings representing the celestial equator, the ecliptic, the tropics and other great imaginary circles of the sky, it is not used directly to observe the stars but to understand their apparent motion. By handling this model of the cosmos, students can visualise phenomena that would otherwise be very difficult to imagine. For centuries, it remained one of the finest educational tools in astronomy.

Astronomical clocks also began to appear in several European cities. They did not merely tell the time. They indicated the phases of the Moon, the Sun’s position in the zodiac, the major festivals of the calendar and sometimes even the movements of the known planets. True marvels of mechanics, they bear witness to medieval societies’ fascination with the rhythms of the heavens.

All these instruments share the same objective: to transform observation into measurement. Observing a star is one thing; determining its position with precision, and then locating that same position several years later, is quite another. It is thanks to this rigour that astronomers can

compare their observations, identify discrepancies and gradually refine their models of the cosmos.

Their manufacture requires considerable expertise. The graduations must be marked out with care, the angles calculated with precision, and the materials chosen to stand the test of time. Behind every instrument lie craftsmen, metalworkers, engravers and mathematicians whose names are often forgotten. The history of science is also their own.

Astrology benefits directly from these technical advances. To draw up a birth chart, one must know exactly the positions of the planets, the Sun and the Moon at the time in question. The more precise the instruments become, the more reliable the astronomical calculations are. Since ancient times, the most serious astrologers have known that an interpretation can only be as good as the observations on which it is based.

It is striking to note that all these instruments function without lenses or mirrors. Medieval astronomers worked solely with geometry, mathematics and extraordinary patience. Night after night, they recorded the positions of the celestial bodies, noted down the results and compared them with those of their predecessors. This accumulation of measurements constitutes one of the finest examples of intergenerational cooperation.

When we visit a museum of the history of science today, these instruments may seem modest compared to modern telescopes or space probes. Yet they made possible the first major maps of the sky, the first precise star catalogues and the first astronomical calculations of remarkable accuracy. They are the silent foundations upon which all of modern astronomy would be built.

By the end of the Middle Ages, European craftsmen were further refining these tools. Quadrants became enormous; some observatories built fixed instruments several metres in diameter; and measurement methods achieved a level of precision never before seen. Everything was now in place for a revolution that no one could yet imagine. In a few decades' time, a Polish canon named Nicolaus Copernicus would put forward an idea that would forever change the way we look at the sky.

Episode 6: Nicolaus Copernicus: the man who moved the Earth

For nearly fifteen centuries, the model devised by Claudius Ptolemy had provided a coherent representation of the heavens. Astronomers had refined, expanded and corrected it, but its fundamental principle remained unchanged: the Earth occupied the centre of the Universe and the stars appeared to revolve around it. This view seemed to tally with everyday experience. After all, everyone could see the Sun rise in the east, cross the sky and set in the west. There seemed to be no indication that our planet was moving.

Towards the end of the 15th century, however, one man began to consider another possibility. Born in 1473 in Toruń, in Royal Prussia, Nicolaus Copernicus received an exceptionally broad education. He studied mathematics, astronomy, canon law, medicine and languages. Like many scholars of his time, he was not a specialist in any single discipline. He belonged to the humanist tradition, which held that different fields of knowledge complemented one another.

During his studies in Italy, Copernicus rediscovered the great authors of antiquity as well as the works of Arab astronomers. He was thoroughly familiar with Ptolemy, Hipparchus, Al-Battani and several other scholars whose observations fuelled his thinking. His aim was not to challenge their work, but to resolve a difficulty that had long preoccupied him. The geocentric system had become extremely complex. To account for the observed movements of the planets, it was necessary to multiply the number of epicycles, deferents and geometric adjustments. The calculations worked, but the whole system lacked elegance.

Copernicus then wondered whether this complexity might not stem from a flawed initial assumption. What if it were not the Sun that revolved round the Earth, but the Earth that revolved round the Sun?

This idea was not entirely new. Eighteen centuries earlier, Aristarchus of Samos had already considered a similar hypothesis. It had, however, failed to gain any real traction. Copernicus took it up again, examined it using the mathematical tools of his time and gradually constructed a new model of the solar system.

In this model, the Sun occupies a central position, whilst the Earth becomes one planet amongst many. It rotates on its axis every day – which explains the alternation of day and night – and completes an annual revolution around the Sun. The retrograde motions of the planets, which had forced Ptolemy to introduce numerous geometric contrivances, now appear to be mere optical illusions resulting from the Earth's movement.

This new organisation of the cosmos did not immediately resolve all the difficulties. Copernicus still retained several

ideas inherited from antiquity, notably the notion that celestial movements must be perfectly circular. His model therefore still included a few epicycles. Yet a decisive change had just taken place. For the first time in centuries, the Earth ceased to occupy a privileged position in the architecture of the world.

Copernicus, however, remained a cautious man. For many years, he hesitated to publish his research. He knew that his hypothesis challenged a conception of the cosmos deeply rooted in philosophical and scientific traditions. It was not until 1543, shortly before his death, that his magnum opus, **De revolutionibus orbium coelestium** (‘On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres’), was published. According to a frequently recounted tradition, he is said to have received a printed copy of his book on the very day he died. The anecdote may be embellished, but it perfectly symbolises a life devoted to research.

Initial reactions were muted. Many scholars regarded the heliocentric system as an interesting mathematical construct, useful for simplifying certain calculations, without going so far as to claim that it described reality. It would take several more decades of observations, followed by the work of Tycho Brahe, Kepler and, above all, Galileo, before this new vision of the cosmos began to gain acceptance.

Copernicus’s story teaches us a vital lesson. Major scientific revolutions rarely arise from a sudden rejection of the past. On the contrary, they emerge from a thorough understanding of previous work. Copernicus could never have moved the Earth if he had not first studied Ptolemy, the Greek astronomers and the Arab-Persian scholars with

admiration. His revolution was the result of a long intellectual continuity.
For the history of astrology, this transformation also heralds a period of reflection. Calculations of planetary positions remained possible, but the general conception of the cosmos changed profoundly. Gradually, a new question arose: could the interpretations inherited from a geocentric universe be rethought within a system where the Earth no longer occupied the centre? This question would occupy astrologers for several centuries and help to renew their approaches.
In the next episode, we shall meet Tycho Brahe, a figure as brilliant as he was original. Thanks to gigantic instruments and exceptional rigour in his observations, he would carry out the most precise measurements ever obtained prior to the invention of the astronomical telescope and, without realising it, pave the way for Johannes Kepler's discoveries.

Episode 7: Tycho Brahe – the man who measured the heavens like no one before him

In November 1572, people across Europe looked up at the sky and witnessed an extraordinary sight. A star of exceptional brightness, **never seen before**, had appeared in the constellation of Cassiopeia. No one had ever observed it before. For several months, it shone brightly before gradually fading. Today, we know that it was a supernova, the explosion of a star located thousands of light-years away. For astronomers of the time, this event called into question a belief that was nearly two thousand years old: is the sky truly unchanging?

Among those observing this mysterious star was a young Danish nobleman named Tycho Brahe. Born in 1546 into an influential family, he discovered his passion for astronomy at a very early age. A partial solar eclipse he witnessed as a teenager left a deep impression on him. It was not so much the phenomenon itself that impressed him as the fact that it had been accurately predicted. From that day on, he resolved to devote his life to the study of the heavens.

Tycho had a character as unconventional as it was brilliant. A quarrel in his youth with another student ended in a duel during which he lost part of his nose. For the rest of his life, he wore a metal prosthesis, probably made of an alloy of copper and brass, carefully fitted to his face. This anecdote has contributed greatly to his fame, but it should not obscure the essential point: Tycho was, above all, an observer of exceptional talent.

The King of Denmark, Frederick II of Denmark, quickly recognised his genius. He gifted him the island of Hven, situated in the Øresund strait, along with the resources to build an unrivalled observatory there. Tycho had Uraniborg built there, soon followed by a second underground observatory, Stjerneborg. These buildings housed the most sophisticated instruments ever produced prior to the invention of the astronomical telescope.

At that time, astronomers did not yet have any telescopes. All observations were made with the naked eye. To compensate for this limitation, Tycho devised quadrants, sextants, armillary spheres and immense graduated circles, some of which were several metres in diameter. The larger the instrument, the more precise the measurement could

be. Thanks to this simple yet ingenious idea, he achieved unrivalled accuracy.

For more than twenty years, night after night, Tycho and his assistants methodically recorded the positions of the stars, the Sun, the Moon and the planets. The observations were verified, compared and carefully recorded. Never before had such a vast amount of data been gathered with such remarkable precision.

The supernova of 1572 was his first major discovery. By carefully studying its position, Tycho demonstrated that it exhibited no measurable parallax. It was therefore situated well beyond the Moon, amongst the fixed stars. This conclusion overturned Aristotelian physics, according to which the heavens were perfect, eternal and incapable of change. A few years later, his observation of a brilliant comet enabled him to show that such objects traversed celestial regions thought to consist of solid spheres. Once again, an ancient belief crumbled in the face of the facts.

More surprisingly, however, Tycho did not subscribe to Copernicus's heliocentric system. He proposed an intermediate model in which the Earth remained stationary at the centre of the world whilst the Sun revolved around it, with the other planets orbiting the Sun. Today, this solution seems strange to us, but it reflects the hesitations of his era. Observations were becoming increasingly precise, whilst the old representations of the cosmos were gradually losing their coherence.

Tycho's true legacy may not lie in his cosmological model, but in the exceptional quality of his measurements. They were so precise that a young German mathematician, hired as his assistant a few months before his death, would soon discover patterns in them that no one had yet noticed.

This young scholar was Johannes Kepler.
Thanks to the observations accumulated over a lifetime by Tycho Brahe, Kepler would establish the three laws describing the motion of the planets, which would definitively pave the way for modern astronomy.
Tycho's story reminds us of a fundamental truth. Great discoveries do not always arise from new ideas. They also depend on the quality of observations. Before a theory can be transformed, the world must be measured with sufficient precision for the facts to speak for themselves. Tycho devoted his entire life to this mission. By patiently observing the sky, he enabled others to finally understand the dance of the planets.

Episode 8 Johannes Kepler: the man who discovered the secret music of the planets

When Tycho Brahe died in 1601, he left behind the most precious astronomical treasure of his time: ‘ ’ – several decades' worth of observations of a precision never before achieved. These thousands of measurements passed into the hands of a thirty-year-old German mathematician, Johannes Kepler. Without realising it, he was about to transform our understanding of the solar system forever.
Born in 1571 in the Holy Roman Empire, Kepler had a difficult childhood. Of frail health, he suffered from poor eyesight throughout his life, which makes it all the more remarkable that he went on to become one of the greatest astronomers of all time. From a very early age, he showed a fascination for mathematics and held a conviction that would guide his entire life: the Universe possesses a profound order that human intelligence can uncover.

This idea has its roots in the Pythagorean tradition. Like Pythagoras, Kepler believed that numbers and proportions reveal the harmony of the cosmos. But, unlike many of his predecessors, he refused to be satisfied with a harmony that was merely imagined. If it truly existed, it had to be evident in observations.

Tycho Brahe's observations offered him a unique opportunity to put this intuition to the test. For several years, Kepler attempted to explain the motion of Mars using the perfect circles inherited from ancient astronomy. The calculations seemed almost correct, but a small discrepancy remained. Just eight arcminutes. Many scholars would have regarded this discrepancy as negligible. Kepler, however, took a decision that would change the history of science. He chose to challenge a two-thousand-year-old theoretical rather than ignore a precise observation.

This commitment to the facts led him to an extraordinary discovery.

The planets do not move in circles.

They follow ellipses.

This conclusion, published in 1609 in **Astronomia Nova**, constitutes the first of his three famous laws. The other two would follow a few years later and demonstrate that the speed of the planets varies during their revolution and that their periods of revolution are related to their distance from the Sun according to a mathematical relationship of remarkable elegance.

For the first time, celestial movements were no longer described by a succession of complicated circles and epicycles accumulated since Ptolemy. A few simple laws

were now sufficient to account for the behaviour of the planets with a precision hitherto unimaginable.
Kepler's working conditions were far from easy, however. The Wars of Religion were ravaging parts of Europe. Financial difficulties were frequent. His mother was even accused of witchcraft. Convinced of her innocence, Kepler devoted several years to organising her legal defence and eventually secured her acquittal. This episode serves as a reminder of how deeply scholars of that era remained entangled in the religious, social and political tensions of their time.
To support himself, Kepler also worked as imperial astrologer to Rudolf II. This occupation may seem surprising today, but it was common among astronomers at the time. The astronomical calculations required to draw up horoscopes provided a steady source of income. Kepler wrote numerous astrological charts and almanacs, whilst expressing a highly personal view on astrology.
He severely criticised the simplistic predictions and ready-made formulas that were already in circulation in his day. He sometimes compared popular astrology to a carefree daughter living off her respectable mother, astronomy. Yet he did not entirely reject the idea of a link between the heavens and the Earth. He simply believed that this link must be sought with far greater caution and rigour than most of his contemporaries practised.
This nuance is important.
Kepler does not oppose astrology as such.
Above all, he combats excesses, over-generalisations and claims that do not stand up to critical scrutiny.
His approach once again demonstrates a deep respect for the facts.

Kepler's work marked a decisive turning point in the history of science. A few decades later, his laws would enable Isaac Newton to discover universal gravitation, thereby providing a physical explanation for the movements of the planets. The harmony of which Kepler dreamt was therefore not merely a matter of philosophy. It was enshrined in the very laws of nature.
In the next episode, we shall meet a man who, thanks to a seemingly modest invention, will open up a completely new window onto the Universe. By pointing a simple telescope at the sky, Galileo Galilei will reveal lunar landscapes, unknown moons and thousands of stars invisible to the naked eye. The sky will never be viewed in the same way again.

Episode 9: Galileo – the man who opened a new window onto the Universe

On several occasions during our journey, the same idea has recurred. Progress in astronomy depends not only on theories, but also on instruments. The Babylonians had perfected their observations with the naked eye. Hipparchus had compiled the first major catalogue of stars. Arab-Persian astronomers had improved the quadrant and the astrolabe. Tycho Brahe had taken measurements to a level of precision never before achieved. Yet one obstacle remained: the human eye had its limits.
In the early 17th century, an invention from the Netherlands was to change the way the sky was observed forever.

Around 1608, several Dutch craftsmen developed an instrument capable of magnifying distant objects. The news spread rapidly. Among those who heard of it was a professor of mathematics at the University of Padua: Galileo Galilei.

Galileo did not merely replicate the instrument.

He perfected it.

By improving the quality of the lenses and their assembly, he built a telescope capable of magnifying objects about twenty times over – a remarkable achievement for his time. Then, one evening in 1609, he made a decision whose full significance he probably did not yet realise.

He turned his telescope towards the sky.

What he discovered exceeded all expectations.

The Moon is not a perfectly smooth sphere, as many had believed since ancient times. Its surface features mountains, valleys, cliffs and vast plains. Thanks to the play of light and shadow, Galileo even estimates the height of certain landforms. For the first time, another world appears as a real landscape.

A few weeks later, he observed the Milky Way.

To the naked eye, it looked like a whitish streak cutting across the night sky. Through the telescope, it was revealed to be made up of a multitude of stars that had previously been invisible. The sky suddenly seemed infinitely vaster than anyone had ever imagined.

Then came an even more spectacular discovery.

As he observed Jupiter night after night, Galileo noticed four small points of light that regularly changed position. After several weeks of observation, he realised that these were four moons orbiting the giant planet. Now known as Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto, these moons

demonstrated that a celestial body can orbit a body other than the Earth. This simple observation profoundly undermined the idea that our planet necessarily occupied the centre of all celestial movements.

Galileo continued his research.

He observed the phases of Venus, a phenomenon that the traditional geocentric model struggled to explain but which fitted naturally with Copernicus's heliocentric system. He also discovered sunspots, showing that the Sun itself is not unchanging. Little by little, the image of a perfect and eternal sky inherited from Aristotle gave way to the observations.

In 1610, he published his discoveries in a short work entitled **Sidereus Nuncius** ('The Starry Messenger'). The book caused a huge stir. For the first time, everyone could see that the Universe was richer, more complex and more surprising than anything previously imagined.

The debates quickly became heated.

Not all scholars immediately accepted these new observations. Some doubted the reliability of the telescope. Others believed that the images might be distorted by the lenses. Several even refused to look through the instrument, convinced that the ancients could not have been wrong.

Galileo's difficulties stemmed not only from his astronomical discoveries but also from their interpretation. Convinced that the observations confirmed the Copernican system, he publicly defended this position in a particularly sensitive religious and philosophical context. The trial that began a few years later remains one of the most famous episodes in the history of science. Historians now show that this affair was far more complex

than has long been recounted, involving a mix of scientific, theological, political and personal issues.
One phrase is often associated with this episode: ‘And yet it moves!’ According to tradition, Galileo is said to have murmured this after being forced to recant. However, no contemporary source confirms this anecdote. It probably belongs more to legend than to history. Indeed, Galileo’s true greatness has no need of this phrase.
His legacy lies elsewhere.
It lies in a simple and revolutionary idea: when a new instrument enables us to observe a phenomenon that was previously invisible, we must accept that our understanding of the world may change. Scientific progress does not consist merely of better explaining what we already know; it also consists of discovering what no one had yet seen.
The consequences of this new way of looking at things are immense. The Universe ceases to be a static backdrop. It becomes a vast, complex space, constantly being explored. Every technical advance now opens up unimagined horizons.
In the next episode, we will conclude this season with Isaac Newton. By bringing together the discoveries of Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo into a single theory of universal gravitation, he will give the cosmos a coherence that no one had yet imagined and usher in a new era in the history of astronomy.

Episode 10: Isaac Newton – the man who linked the apple to the planets

Since the beginning of these Chronicles, we have been following a journey spanning several thousand years. The earliest hunter-gatherers observed the phases of the Moon. The priests of Babylon recorded the movements of the planets on clay tablets. The Greeks sought to understand the order of the cosmos. Arab-Persian scholars perfected astronomical calculations. Copernicus had shifted the Earth's position, Tycho Brahe had measured the heavens with unrivalled precision, Kepler had discovered that the planets follow elliptical orbits, and Galileo had revealed a universe infinitely richer than that imagined by the ancients. Yet one question remained unanswered: why do the planets follow precisely these orbits?

It was this question that Isaac Newton would answer.

Born in 1642, a few months after Galileo's death, Newton grew up in an England buzzing with intellectual excitement. Astronomical observations were becoming more frequent, mathematics was advancing rapidly, and Copernicus's ideas, along with Kepler's laws, were by now widely known amongst European scholars. Newton thus inherited several centuries' worth of accumulated knowledge. Like all the great researchers who had gone before him, he did not start from scratch. He built upon the work of previous generations to take things further.

A famous anecdote tells that one day, whilst in an orchard, Newton saw an apple fall from a tree and wondered whether the force drawing the fruit towards the ground might not be the same as that which kept the Moon in orbit around the Earth. This story is probably more complex

than the popular legend suggests. It does, however, reflect a remarkable insight: the phenomena observed on Earth and those governing celestial movements may obey the same laws.

This idea seems almost self-evident today.

At the end of the 17th century, it was revolutionary.

Since ancient times, many philosophers had drawn a clear distinction between the earthly world, subject to change, and the celestial world, believed to be perfect and governed by different principles. Newton erased this boundary. Heaven and Earth now belong to the same Universe.

In 1687, his magnum opus, **Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica**, better known as *the *Principia**, was published. In this monumental work, Newton formulated the three laws of motion and, above all, the law of universal gravitation. According to this law, all bodies in the Universe attract one another. The strength of this attraction depends on their mass and the distance between them.

This law finally explains why the planets follow the orbits discovered by Kepler. It accounts for the movements of the Moon, the tides, comets and numerous celestial phenomena by means of a single mathematical principle. For the first time, a single theory made it possible to unify observations which, until then, had seemed to belong to different fields.

The impact was immense.

Astronomers now had a tool capable not only of describing the movements of celestial bodies, but also of explaining them. Calculations became more accurate. The orbits of comets could be predicted. The irregularities observed in

planetary movements became mathematical problems that could be solved.

Newton did not, however, confine himself to celestial mechanics. He also carried out major work in optics, demonstrating in particular that white light is composed of all the colours of the spectrum. He invented the mirror-telescope, which helps to avoid certain distortions produced by the lenses of astronomical telescopes. Here again, instruments advanced in tandem with ideas.

Newton, however, was a more complex figure than is often imagined. He devoted a significant part of his life to alchemy, the study of biblical texts and ancient chronology. This research, long regarded as marginal, serves as a reminder that the boundaries between disciplines were still very different from those we know today. The greatest scholars remained explorers of all fields of knowledge.

Newton's work marks a decisive turning point in our understanding of the cosmos. For millennia, humankind had been observing the heavens, measuring the movements of the celestial bodies and developing increasingly precise models. With the theory of universal gravitation, humankind discovered that these movements obey simple laws, identical throughout the Universe. A new worldview gradually took hold: nature is intelligible, and mathematics enables us to express its regularities.

For the history of astrology, this scientific revolution also heralded a new era. Astronomy gradually became a science based on observation, experimentation and the laws of physics. Astrology, meanwhile, took a different path. The two disciplines, which had long been inseparable, began to diverge more clearly. This

development did not happen overnight; it spanned several centuries and gave rise to debates that are still ongoing today.

In the next series, we will explore the Age of Enlightenment and the dawn of modern astronomy. We shall see how the discovery of new planets, the spectacular improvement in telescopes and the gradual specialisation of the sciences would profoundly alter the place of astrology in Western culture. We shall also discover how, despite these transformations, the sky would continue to inspire researchers, philosophers, artists… and all those who look up at the stars with the same curiosity as their distant ancestors.

Series 6: The Sky Grows Wider

Episode 1 William Herschel: The Night the Solar System Grew Larger

On 13 March 1781, an amateur astronomer and musician was observing the sky from the garden of his home in the English city of Bath. For several years, he had been building his own telescopes and spending much of his nights methodically exploring the stars. That evening, he noticed a small point of light that did not quite resemble the others. There was as yet no indication that he had just made one of the greatest discoveries in the history of astronomy.

This man's name was William Herschel.

Born in 1738 in Hanover, then part of the British Crown, Herschel began his career as a musician. He played the oboe, conducted orchestras and composed numerous works. However, his passion for mathematics and observing the sky eventually came to play an increasingly important role in his life. As the telescopes available at the time were extremely expensive, he learnt to make their metal mirrors himself, polished them with infinite patience and built ever more sophisticated instruments.

This approach perfectly illustrates the scientific spirit of the 18th century. Scientists were no longer content simply to use existing instruments; they were constantly improving them. Every technical advance made it possible to discover objects that had previously been invisible.

When Herschel observed the mysterious celestial body on that March evening in 1781, he initially thought he had discovered a comet. Observations continued, however, at

several European observatories. Gradually, calculations revealed that this object followed an almost circular orbit, very different from that of comets. One conclusion then became clear: it was a planet.

This was a momentous event.

Since ancient times, humankind had known of five planets visible to the naked eye: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. For millennia, no one had imagined that another planet could exist beyond Saturn. Ancient observers had sometimes glimpsed it without recognising it, mistaking it for a mere star because of its extremely slow movement. Herschel was the first to understand its true nature.

The solar system had suddenly expanded.

Scientific academies hailed this exceptional discovery. King George III granted Herschel a pension that allowed him to devote himself entirely to astronomy. For the first time, an astronomer became famous not for proposing a new theory, but for revealing the existence of an unknown world.

The choice of name for this planet, incidentally, sparked some debate. Herschel initially wished to call it *Georgium Sidus*, 'George's Star', in honour of his sovereign. This proposal did little to convince European astronomers. Eventually, the name Uranus gradually gained acceptance, continuing the mythological tradition of the ancient planets.

But Herschel's work did not stop there.

Accompanied by his sister, Caroline Herschel – herself a remarkable observer – he undertook a vast survey of the sky. Together, they discovered thousands of nebulae, star clusters, and several moons of Uranus and Saturn.

Herschel also realised that the Sun itself moves through space, an idea that profoundly changed the way people at the time understood our place in the Universe.

His telescopes became enormous. One of them was over twelve metres long and remained the world's largest astronomical instrument for nearly half a century. Visitors from all over Europe travelled to admire this extraordinary machine, which seemed to connect the Earth directly to the stars.

For the history of astrology, the discovery of Uranus presented an unprecedented challenge. For two thousand years, astrological systems had been developed around the seven traditional celestial bodies. The appearance of a new planet immediately raised a question that no one had ever asked before: should it be assigned a meaning? If so, what? The answers were neither immediate nor unanimous. They would occupy astrologers throughout the 19th century and open a new chapter in their history.

The discovery of Uranus ultimately reminds us of an essential lesson. Even when we believe we have explored the world, there are often still uncharted territories. For nearly four thousand years, people had observed this planet without recognising its true nature. It took a more powerful instrument, a more attentive eye and the curiosity of a passionate musician to reveal that a new world had been silently orbiting the Sun since time immemorial.

In the next episode, we will discover how a strange anomaly observed in Uranus' e motion will lead astronomers to a new intellectual feat. For the first time in history, a planet will be discovered… not by seeing it, but by calculating its existence. This adventure will take us to Urbain Le Verrier and the discovery of Neptune.

Episode 2 Neptune: the planet that mathematics discovered before telescopes

William Herschel's discovery of Uranus in 1781 had profoundly transformed astronomers' understanding of the solar system. A new planet had just been added to the six already known. Yet, a few decades later, this very same planet was to become the starting point for an even more extraordinary mystery.

Astronomers were now monitoring Uranus very closely. Thanks to Newton's laws, they were able to calculate with remarkable precision the orbit this planet should follow around the Sun. In the early years, everything seemed to fit the predictions perfectly. But as more observations were gathered, one detail caught their attention. Uranus did not always occupy exactly the expected position. The differences were small, almost imperceptible, but they recurred with a regularity that puzzled the experts.

Several explanations were considered. Were the observations flawed? Did the calculations contain an error? Could Newton's laws be inaccurate at such a great distance from the Sun? Or might another, as yet unknown, planet be exerting a e gravitational pull on Uranus and slightly altering its trajectory?

This last hypothesis seems rather bold.

How can an invisible planet be discovered?

How could its position be determined when no one had yet observed it?

In the mid-19th century, two young mathematicians were working almost simultaneously on this puzzle, unaware of each other's research. In England, John Couch Adams set about calculating where this mysterious planet might be.

In France, Urbain Le Verrier was conducting exactly the same investigation.
The challenge was immense.
It was not a matter of searching for a random object in the vastness of the sky, but of locating an invisible body based solely on its gravitational effects. Here, mathematics became a genuine instrument of observation.
For months, Le Verrier went over his calculations, refined his estimates and finally published the position where he believed the unknown planet must be. His confidence surprised many of his colleagues. After all, no one had seen it yet.
On 23 September 1846, the astronomer Johann Gottfried Galle received a letter from Le Verrier at the Berlin Observatory. It contained a very simple request: to point the telescope at a specific region of the sky.
No sooner had he begun his observation than a small luminous disc caught his attention.
It was less than one degree from the calculated position.
The planet existed.
It would soon be named Neptune.
The announcement caused a huge stir in the scientific world.
For the first time in history, a planet had been discovered through mathematics before being observed. Newton's laws had just demonstrated extraordinary predictive power. They no longer served merely to explain the motion of known planets; they now made it possible to reveal the existence of worlds that were as yet invisible.
One question remains, however.
Who should be considered the true discoverer of Neptune?

The debate quickly took hold in European academies. The British highlighted the pioneering work of John Couch Adams. The French emphasised Le Verrier's more comprehensive calculations and the decisive role of his letter to Berlin. Today, historians generally recognise that the two mathematicians arrived independently at remarkably similar results, even though it was indeed Le Verrier's prediction that led directly to the observation of the planet.

This story marks a decisive milestone in the evolution of astronomy. For millennia, discoveries had stemmed primarily from observation. From then on, equations became capable of indicating where to look. Mathematics ceased to be merely a language describing nature; it became a genuine tool for exploration.

For astrologers, the discovery of Neptune raised new questions. Following Uranus, a second planet unknown to the ancients came to enrich the solar system. Here again, it was necessary to consider its potential role in the interpretation of astrological charts. These debates would continue throughout the 19th century and contribute to the gradual transformation of certain astrological approaches.

Finally, the story of Neptune reminds us that a discovery does not always begin with what we see. It sometimes arises from an almost insignificant detail, a slight discrepancy in a calculation or an anomaly that others would have deemed negligible. Behind those few arcminutes lay a giant planet that had been orbiting the Sun silently for over four billion years.

In the next episode, we shall discover how the search for a new planet will this time lead to an unexpected surprise. Astronomers believe they have found another world

beyond Neptune. They will name it Pluto. But its story will take a turn that no one could have imagined at the time of its discovery.

Episode 3: Pluto – the planet whose fate changed several times

No sooner had Neptune been discovered than astronomers began looking even further out. A few irregularities observed in the movements of Uranus and Neptune suggested that another world might still be hiding at the outer reaches of the solar system. This mysterious ‘Planet X’ became one of the great challenges of astronomy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Among those passionate about this quest was Percival Lowell. Convinced that an unknown planet beyond Neptune was disrupting the orbits of the gas giants, he devoted part of his fortune to building an observatory in Arizona. For years, he and his colleagues tirelessly photographed different regions of the sky in the hope of discovering this invisible world. Despite all their efforts, Lowell died in 1916 without having found the planet he was searching for.

The story might have ended there.

But the observatory he had founded continued the research.

In 1929, a young farmer with a passion for astronomy was recruited to methodically compare thousands of photographic plates. His name was Clyde Tombaugh. His work required extraordinary patience. Using a comparator known as a ‘flasher’, he examined two photographs taken a few days apart. The stars remained stationary, but an

object in the solar system shifted slightly from one image to the next.

On 18 February 1930, Tombaugh finally spotted the tiny point of light he had been searching for.

After several checks, the announcement was made official. A new planet had just been discovered.

It was soon named Pluto, a suggestion put forward by an eleven-year-old English girl, Venetia Burney, who was passionate about mythology. The choice immediately appealed to astronomers. Pluto is the Roman god of the underworld, a name perfectly suited to a celestial body orbiting in the outermost regions of the solar system.

For several decades, Pluto naturally became the ninth planet.

School textbooks, star charts and encyclopaedias included it without hesitation. However, one detail soon intrigued astronomers. Pluto appeared surprisingly small. As instruments improved, it was discovered that its mass was much smaller than had been imagined. It is even smaller than our Moon.

From the 1990s onwards, discoveries began to multiply.

Telescopes revealed the existence of numerous icy objects beyond Neptune. This vast region, now known as the Kuiper Belt, appeared to be a veritable population of small worlds. Pluto no longer seemed as exceptional as it once had.

The decisive turning point came in 2005.

Astronomers have discovered a new object, Eris, which is comparable in size to, or even slightly larger than, Pluto. One question inevitably arises. If Pluto is a planet, must Eris be one too? And what about the many other similar objects that are beginning to be detected?

Faced with this situation, the International Astronomical Union adopted a new definition of the word ‘planet’ in 2006. According to this definition, a celestial body must not only orbit the Sun and be nearly spherical in shape, but must also have ‘cleared’ the neighbourhood of its orbit by becoming largely dominant in its region of the Solar System.

Pluto meets the first two criteria.

But not the third.

It was therefore reclassified into a new category: that of dwarf planets.

This decision sparked intense debate around the world.

Many people have a genuine fondness for Pluto and see this reclassification as a loss. Astronomers, for their part, point out that science is not taking anything away from Pluto. It is simply seeking to adapt its classifications when new discoveries render the old categories inadequate.

Today, Pluto seems more fascinating than ever.

In 2015, the New Horizons probe flew past it for the first time. The images revealed a world of astonishing diversity, with vast ice plains, mountains several kilometres high, a thin atmosphere and a huge heart-shaped basin that has become famous throughout the world. Far from being a mere point of light lost in the darkness, Pluto has proved to be a world in its own right.

Its history reminds us that science is constantly evolving. The words we use to classify objects in the Universe may sometimes change, but the realities they describe remain the same. Whether it is classified as a planet or a dwarf planet, Pluto continues to orbit the Sun silently, just as it has done for over four billion years.

The discovery of Pluto was to have a considerable influence on the history of astrology. Throughout the 20th century, many astrologers sought to understand the symbolic significance of this new planet and to incorporate it into their systems of interpretation. This line of thought opened up a vast field of research that continues to this day and which, a few decades later, paved the way for the inclusion of an ever-increasing number of asteroids, centaurs and trans-Neptunian objects.
In the next episode, we shall leave the planets behind to set off in search of another fascinating world: that of the asteroids. Long regarded as mere rocky fragments, they will prove to be invaluable witnesses to the birth of the Solar System and will, in turn, transform our understanding of the origins of the cosmos.

Episode 4: Asteroids: the forgotten worlds between Mars and Jupiter

By the end of the 18th century, astronomers were convinced that a planet was missing. For a long time, a numerical relationship known as the Titius-Bode law had seemed to describe, with astonishing precision, the distances between the planets and the Sun. Yet this rule revealed a gap between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter. Many therefore imagined that a yet-unknown world lay waiting to be discovered in this region of the sky.
This idea excited the scientific community. In 1800, a group of twenty-four European astronomers decided to divide up the sky amongst themselves in order to methodically search for this mysterious planet. With a touch of humour, they dubbed themselves the ‘celestial

police'. Their mission seemed simple: to explore a section of the sky every night until the sought-after celestial body finally revealed itself.

But the first person to succeed was not even a member of that team.

On 1 January 1801, whilst compiling a catalogue of stars at the Palermo Observatory in Sicily, Giuseppe Piazzi noticed a small point of light moving slowly amongst the stars. At first, he thought he had discovered a comet. However, calculations soon showed that its orbit was almost circular. The object was indeed orbiting the Sun between Mars and Jupiter.

The discovery sparked immense enthusiasm.

The new celestial body was named Ceres, in honour of the Roman goddess of the harvest, who was particularly revered in Sicily. Many believed at the time that the missing planet had finally been found.

Yet the story had only just begun.

Barely a year later, a second object was discovered in the same region: Pallas. Then came Juno and Vesta. Astronomers gradually realised that they were not dealing with a single planet, but with an entire population of small bodies orbiting the Sun.

For several decades, these new objects were still referred to as planets. However, their numbers grew so rapidly that this classification became difficult to maintain. By 1851, fifteen were already known. By the end of the 19th century, there were several hundred. Today, observations made from Earth and by space telescopes have identified several hundred thousand, whilst their total number is probably in the millions.

It was the astronomer William Herschel who proposed the term ‘asteroid’, literally meaning ‘star-like’. As seen through the instruments of his time, each of these objects did indeed appear as a mere point of light, with no visible disc, unlike the large planets.

For a long time, a fascinating idea circulated amongst astronomers: that asteroids were the debris of a planet that had exploded in the very distant past. This hypothesis captured the imagination for nearly a century. Advances in celestial mechanics and planetary science would eventually reveal a different reality. Asteroids do not originate from a destroyed planet. They consist of primordial material that never managed to form a planet due to Jupiter’s gravitational influence.

This discovery gives them exceptional scientific value.

Asteroids have become veritable fossils of the Solar System. Many have remained relatively unchanged since their formation, some 4.56 billion years ago. By studying them, researchers hope to understand the early stages of planetary formation and to reconstruct the conditions that prevailed at the dawn of our cosmic neighbourhood.

Space missions of the 21st century will confirm this interest. Spacecraft will visit several asteroids, collect samples and bring them back to Earth for analysis with a precision that was unimaginable just a few decades ago. These small worlds, long regarded as secondary, are thus becoming privileged witnesses to the history of the solar system.

The history of asteroids is also of particular interest to astrology. When only four objects were known — Ceres, Pallas, Juno and Vesta — some astrologers began to attribute symbolic significance to them. As discoveries

continued, this line of thinking extended to an ever-increasing number of asteroids, opening up an entirely new field of study that continues to evolve today.
This adventure reminds us once again just how full of surprises the sky is. Astronomers were looking for a planet; they discovered a vast family of tiny worlds. Every answer provided by science often raises questions even broader than those it set out to answer.
In the next episode, we shall continue this exploration of the Solar System's new inhabitants with an even more astonishing category of objects. Neither true asteroids nor quite comets, Centaurs follow unstable orbits amongst the giant planets. Their discovery will once again revolutionise our understanding of the Solar System's boundaries and open a new chapter in contemporary astronomy.

Episode 5 Centaurs: the wanderers of the Solar System

For nearly two centuries, astronomers believed they had understood the overall structure of the Solar System. The planets follow their regular orbits around the Sun. Asteroids are mainly found in the region between Mars and Jupiter. Comets, meanwhile, appear from time to time before heading back to the distant regions of the Solar System. This classification seemed satisfactory. However, a new surprise awaited the researchers.
On 1 November 1977, the American astronomer Charles Thomas Kowal observed an unusual object at the Observatory on Mount Palomar, in California. Its orbit immediately intrigued the experts. This body behaved

neither like a conventional asteroid nor like an ordinary comet. It orbited between Saturn and Uranus on an unstable trajectory which, on an astronomical timescale, would cause it to gradually shift to different regions of the solar system.

The object was named Chiron.

At first, astronomers were unsure of its true nature. Its appearance resembled that of an asteroid, but a few years later, they observed a faint tail of gas and dust around it, characteristic of comets. Chiron seemed to belong to both families at once.

A new category of objects has just emerged.

To describe them, astronomers have chosen the name ‘Centaurs’. This choice is particularly apt. In Greek mythology, Centaurs are hybrid beings, half-man, half-horse. Similarly, these new celestial bodies share characteristics common to both asteroids and comets. Their name perfectly captures this dual identity.

Over the following decades, discoveries multiplied.

Pholus, Nessus and Chariklo were discovered in succession, followed by numerous other objects belonging to this strange family. Today, several hundred centaurs are known, and their actual number is probably much higher.

Their behaviour fascinates astronomers.

Unlike the major planets, their orbits are unstable. The powerful gravitational pulls of the giant planets—Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune—gradually alter their trajectories. Some will eventually be ejected from the Solar System. Others will become short-period comets. A few may one day enter the inner regions of the Solar System before disappearing or breaking up.

Researchers now believe that most centaurs originate from the Kuiper Belt, a vast reservoir of icy objects located beyond Neptune. Under the influence of gravitational interactions, some slowly leave this distant region and embark on a journey that can last several million years before reaching the giant planets.

This discovery profoundly transforms our understanding of the Solar System.

It no longer appears as a set of perfectly distinct categories. The boundaries are becoming blurred. Objects move from one family to another over the course of their history. Once again, the Universe proves to be richer and more dynamic than the classifications devised by humans.

Of all the known centaurs, Chariklo holds an unexpected surprise. In 2013, astronomers discovered that it is surrounded by two extremely thin rings. Until then, only the giant planets appeared to possess such structures. This observation demonstrates that even a small body measuring just a few hundred kilometres can exhibit a remarkably complex structure.

Centaurs thus serve as a reminder of a lesson that has become familiar throughout our Chronicles. Whenever scientists think they have completed their inventory of the Solar System, a new discovery broadens the horizon. The ‘ ’ classifications evolve, certainties become more flexible, and curiosity regains its rightful place.

For the history of astrology, the Centaurs will also open a new chapter. From the end of the 20th century onwards, several researchers began to ponder the symbolic significance of Chiron, followed by Pholus, Nessus, Chariklo and other similar objects. This line of thought, still relatively recent in the context of the history of

astrology, will accompany the ever more detailed exploration of the solar system.
In the next episode, we will venture even further, beyond the centaurs and the Kuiper Belt, to discover the astonishing trans-Neptunian objects. Their diversity and sheer number will once again reshape our view of the outer reaches of the solar system and pave the way for the great discoveries of the 21st century.

Episode 6 Beyond Neptune: the discovery of a new celestial continent

For a long time, astronomers imagined that Neptune marked almost the end of the solar system. Beyond its orbit lay a vast, dark expanse where little was known apart from Pluto, discovered in 1930. Many believed at the time that this small planet was an exceptional, solitary object, lost at the edge of the known world.
This view was to be profoundly overturned at the end of the 20th century.
As early as the 1950s, several astronomers put forward a bold idea. Among them was Gerard Kuiper, who suggested that the regions beyond Neptune might contain a vast population of small icy bodies. Other researchers developed similar hypotheses, but no instruments were yet available to verify these intuitions. The objects being sought were extremely faint and moved very slowly against the background of the sky.
It was not until 1992 that this prediction received its first confirmation.
That year, astronomers David Jewitt and Jane Luu discovered a small object situated far beyond Neptune.

Designated 1992 QB1, it became the first identified member of a vast, previously unknown population. Very soon, further discoveries followed. What had seemed to be an exception turned out to belong to a veritable family of icy worlds.

Astronomers then realised that Pluto was not alone.

It forms part of a vast region now known as the Kuiper Belt. This immense ring of objects extends beyond Neptune's orbit for billions of kilometres. It probably contains hundreds of thousands of bodies more than a hundred kilometres in diameter, as well as millions of smaller objects. The Solar System suddenly appeared much vaster than anyone had imagined just a few decades earlier.

Discoveries are coming thick and fast.

One after another, Quaoar, Sedna, Orcus, Haumea, Makemake, Eris, Gonggong and many others have been discovered. Every year seems to bring its own batch of new worlds.

The case of Sedna particularly intrigues astronomers.

Its orbit is so vast that it takes around eleven thousand four hundred years to complete a single revolution around the Sun. Even at its closest approach to our star, it remains well beyond Neptune. At its furthest point, it plunges into the regions where the gigantic Oort Cloud—the supposed reservoir of large comets—probably begins. Sedna appears to belong to an intermediate region about which we knew very little.

These discoveries are profoundly changing our understanding of the Solar System.

For centuries, the planets appeared to form a relatively simple sequence. Now, astronomers are discovering a far

more complex architecture, comprising reservoirs of icy objects, dynamic populations, orbital families and regions whose boundaries remain poorly defined. The Solar System resembles less a perfectly ordered mechanical system than a vast landscape whose various provinces we are gradually exploring.

New generations of telescopes are playing a decisive role in this adventure. Thanks to digital detectors, computing and systematic photographic surveys, astronomers can now automatically compare thousands of images of the sky and detect the extremely slow movement of objects located several billion kilometres away. Whereas 19th-century researchers patiently examined a few photographic plates, their successors today analyse millions of measurements.

For the history of astrology, this period also marks a turning point. Each new discovery raises a question already encountered with Uranus, Neptune and Pluto: do these new celestial bodies possess symbolic significance? Over the past few decades, several astrologers have set out to explore this possibility, opening up an entirely new field of research. Contemporary astrology thus reflects a solar system whose boundaries continue to expand.

This extraordinary wealth of discoveries reminds us of an essential truth. The frontiers of knowledge are constantly receding. In every age, people believe they have reached the limits of the known world. Then a new instrument, a new method or a new idea reveals unimagined horizons. The outer reaches of the solar system have not yet ceased to surprise us.

In the next episode, we shall discover how space probes have left Earth to visit these distant worlds directly. After

millennia spent observing the sky from our planet, humanity is finally beginning to explore the solar system from within. A new scientific adventure is about to begin.

Episode 7: When humanity left Earth to visit the planets

For tens of thousands of years, human beings had gazed at the sky from the same vantage point: the Earth's surface. The Babylonians recorded the movements of the planets on clay tablets. Hipparchus compiled his star catalogues. Galileo perfected the astronomical telescope. Herschel built gigantic telescopes. The instruments were becoming ever more sophisticated, but they remained firmly anchored to our planet. In the mid-20th century, however, an idea previously confined to works of fiction began to become a reality: sending instruments to the planets themselves.

This revolution began with the rise of space exploration. The rockets developed after the Second World War gradually became powerful enough to escape Earth's gravitational pull. The first unmanned probes were launched towards the Moon, and then towards neighbouring planets. They carried no crew. Their mission was to photograph, measure, analyse and transmit their observations back to Earth.

The initial results quickly exceeded all expectations.

The Moon revealed a landscape covered in impact craters, evidence of a history far older than that of our own planet. Venus appeared hidden beneath a thick layer of clouds that completely obscured its surface. Mars, long imagined as a world criss-crossed by mysterious canals, revealed

gigantic volcanoes, immense valleys and traces of ancient water flows.
Then came the era of major explorations of the outer solar system.
In 1977, two twin probes were launched: Voyager 1 and Voyager 2. Their initial aim was to explore the giant planets. They would go on to achieve much more. Thanks to an exceptional alignment of the planets, they used their gravity as a natural slingshot to accelerate their journey and visit, in turn, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune.
The images transmitted turned centuries of established knowledge on its head.
Jupiter revealed an atmosphere in constant motion, swept by colossal storms, including the famous Great Red Spot. Its moons themselves turned out to be worlds in their own right. Io has active volcanoes, Europa probably hides a vast ocean beneath its ice, whilst Ganymede is the largest moon in the Solar System.
Saturn also held its share of surprises. Its rings, which had appeared as relatively simple structures through Earth-based telescopes, were found to consist of thousands of extremely thin rings made of ice and dust. Its moon Titan possesses a dense atmosphere, unique amongst known moons.
When Voyager 2 reached Uranus in 1986 and then Neptune in 1989, humankind discovered these worlds up close for the first time. Uranus appears lying on its side, a consequence of its extremely tilted axis of rotation. Neptune reveals an atmosphere churned by some of the fastest winds in the Solar System. Its moon Triton surprised researchers with its nitrogen geysers and geological activity.

These missions profoundly transformed astronomy. The planets ceased to be mere points of light observed through telescopes. They became landscapes, climates, topography, oceans of ice, volcanoes, storms and worlds, each with its own geological character.

The adventure did not end with Voyager. Other probes would visit Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, comets, asteroids and even Pluto. Each mission brought its own share of unexpected discoveries. The closer astronomers observed the Solar System, the more they realised that no two planets are truly alike.

The Voyager probes are still continuing their journey today. Having left the regions dominated by the planets, they are now traversing the outer reaches of the heliosphere and continuing their journey into interstellar space. On board is a golden disc conceived under the direction of Carl Sagan. This message contains sounds, music, images and greetings in several languages intended for any potential extraterrestrial civilisations. It is a sort of message in a bottle cast into the cosmic ocean.

This extraordinary adventure marks a profound change in our relationship with the heavens. For millennia, astronomy consisted of observing distant celestial bodies. Now, it is also becoming a science of exploration. Planets are no longer merely calculated or photographed; they are visited.

In the next episode, we shall discover another revolution that will transform our view of the Universe. Thanks to space telescopes, and in particular the famous Hubble Space Telescope, astronomers will leave not only Earth, but also its atmosphere, revealing galaxies, nebulae and

cosmic depths of a beauty and precision hitherto unimaginable.

Episode 8: Hubble – the telescope that opened up the depths of the Universe

Ever since Galileo, astronomers have been constantly building ever more powerful telescopes. Mirrors have grown larger, instruments have become more precise, and observatories have been set up on the highest mountains to minimise the effects of atmospheric turbulence as much as possible. Yet one obstacle remained. Even under the clearest skies, the air surrounding our planet slightly distorts the images of the stars. To truly see the Universe with the greatest possible precision, one final step was needed: to place a telescope above the Earth's atmosphere. This project became a reality in 1990 with the launch of the Hubble Space Telescope. Positioned at an altitude of several hundred kilometres, Hubble orbits the Earth in just over an hour and a half. At this height, it is free from atmospheric disturbances and can observe the sky with a clarity previously impossible from the ground.

However, the early days were difficult.

A few weeks after it came into service, astronomers discovered that its primary mirror had a tiny manufacturing defect. The error was minuscule – in the order of a few micrometres – but it was enough to make the images blurry. Some even spoke of a resounding failure. The future of the most ambitious space telescope seemed in jeopardy.

Fortunately, the story does not end there.

In 1993, a Space Shuttle mission installed a corrective system comparable to a pair of glasses specially adapted for the telescope. The result exceeded all expectations. The images became of exceptional quality, and Hubble began to reveal a Universe of unsuspected richness.

The first photographs immediately captivated the general public. Nebulae appeared as immense clouds of gas and dust where new stars were being born. Galaxies revealed their spiral arms with extraordinary detail. Globular clusters revealed hundreds of thousands of stars gathered within a single system. What had once been nothing more than a faint patch of light became a cosmic landscape of spectacular beauty.

But Hubble is not just a camera.

It is a fully-fledged scientific laboratory.

By measuring the distances to numerous galaxies with great precision, it helps to refine estimates of the age of the Universe. It also enables us to observe distant stellar explosions, dust discs where new planetary systems are likely to form, the atmospheres of certain planets in the Solar System, and even the gravitational effects produced by invisible objects.

One of the most famous observations was made in 1995.

Astronomers decided to point Hubble for several days at a region of the sky that appeared almost completely empty. Many thought that this experiment would reveal practically nothing. When the images were stitched together, the surprise was immense. In this tiny portion of the sky, several thousand galaxies appeared, each containing billions of stars. This image, known as the ‘Hubble Deep Field’, profoundly transformed our

perception of the cosmos. The apparent void was in fact teeming with countless distant worlds.

Over the years, Hubble also became a privileged witness to the evolution of the solar system. It tracked storms on Jupiter, observed seasonal changes on Mars, photographed Saturn's rings and even witnessed the spectacular impact of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 on Jupiter in 1994. For the first time, astronomers observed a collision between a planet and a comet in real time.

More than thirty years after its launch, Hubble continues to operate. Several servicing missions have enabled it to replace its instruments and extend its lifespan well beyond initial predictions. Millions of observations have been made thanks to it, giving rise to tens of thousands of scientific publications and transforming almost every field of modern astronomy.

Hubble's story reminds us that a scientific discovery is often the result of perseverance. A fault measuring just a few micrometres could have doomed the entire mission. Instead of giving up, the engineers and astronauts found a solution. This ability to correct errors is an integral part of the scientific process.

Hubble's images have also changed our relationship with the sky. They are not only rich in information; they possess a beauty that resonates with a very wide audience. Many people have discovered an interest in astronomy by gazing at these photographs of galaxies, nebulae or star clusters. Science thus merges with wonder, reminding us that understanding the cosmos never prevents us from marvelling at it even more.

In the next episode, we will discover how astronomers have taken a new step forward by detecting planets

orbiting other stars. For millennia, the Solar System seemed unique. Today, thousands of exoplanets reveal that our galaxy probably harbours a multitude of worlds.

Episode 9: Exoplanets: When Other Suns Revealed Their Worlds

From the earliest observers in prehistory right through to the astronomers of the Renaissance, one idea had taken hold almost naturally: the Solar System seemed to be the only planetary system known to humankind. The stars seemed too distant for anyone to imagine ever discovering the planets that might orbit them. For a long time, this question remained unanswered. Philosophers debated it, writers dreamt of it, but no instrument yet existed to settle the matter.

Everything changed at the end of the 20th century.

In 1995, two Swiss astronomers, Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz, announced a discovery that shook the world of astronomy. Orbiting a star similar to the Sun, named 51 Pegasi, they demonstrated the presence of a planet. It was not the first exoplanet ever detected, but it was the first indisputable discovery of a planet orbiting a star comparable to our Sun. A new era began.

The difficulty of this research is immense.

Planets emit almost no light of their own. They are literally drowned out by the brilliance of their star. Searching for an exoplanet is like trying to spot a firefly flying close to a powerful lighthouse several tens of light-years away.

Astronomers must therefore demonstrate remarkable ingenuity.

Rather than observing the planets directly, they look for the effects they cause. When a planet orbits a star, the star itself undergoes a very slight movement due to their mutual gravitational pull. This tiny wobble imperceptibly alters the star's light. It is precisely this phenomenon that Mayor and Queloz managed to measure.

A few years later, a second method enjoyed spectacular success.

If a planet passes directly in front of its star, it blocks a tiny fraction of the star's light. The drop in brightness is extremely small – sometimes less than one hundredth of a per cent – but modern instruments are capable of detecting it. By repeating these observations, astronomers can determine the planet's size, its orbital period and sometimes even certain characteristics of its atmosphere.

Discoveries then followed one after another at an extraordinary pace.

Space missions such as Kepler and, later, TESS are simultaneously observing hundreds of thousands of stars. The catalogues are growing year on year. Today, several thousand exoplanets have been confirmed, and thousands more candidates are still awaiting verification.

There have been many surprises.

Astronomers are discovering immense gas giants that orbit their star in just a few days. They are identifying worlds entirely covered by oceans, rocky planets more massive than Earth, others orbiting two stars at once, as well as planetary systems whose structure differs profoundly from that of the Solar System.

Each discovery broadens our imagination.

For centuries, our solar system served as the sole model. We now know that it is just one possibility amongst a vast

diversity of planetary arrangements. Nature seems to display a creativity far greater than anything astronomers had ever imagined.

One question therefore keeps coming back with increasing urgency.

Are there worlds elsewhere capable of supporting life?

Researchers are gradually identifying planets located in what is known as the ‘habitable zone’, a region where water could exist in liquid form if the other conditions are met. This mere possibility is fuelling numerous research programmes. So far, no evidence of extraterrestrial life has been discovered. But observational capabilities are advancing rapidly, and several future missions will be specifically aimed at analysing the atmospheres of these distant worlds in search of chemical signatures consistent with biological activity.

The history of exoplanets reminds us once again just how far the frontiers of knowledge are constantly receding. For almost the entire history of humankind, we did not know whether our Sun had any counterparts. In the space of just a few decades, we have come to realise that there are probably countless planets in our galaxy alone. The Solar System is no longer an isolated exception; it appears to be just one of many chapters in an infinitely vaster cosmic history.

This discovery also transforms the way we view ourselves. The more the Universe reveals its richness, the more our planet appears both modest in size and precious because of the exceptional conditions that allowed life to emerge. Exploring the cosmos ultimately leads us to appreciate the world we inhabit all the more.

In the next episode, we will conclude this season with a discovery that naturally extends this adventure. Having explored planets, asteroids, centaurs, trans-Neptunian objects, distant galaxies and exoplanets, we will ask ourselves just how far our curiosity can still take us. New telescopes, state-of-the-art space observatories and artificial intelligence are already turning a new page in the history of astronomy, the first chapters of which we are only just beginning to glimpse.

Episode 10 The Sky of Tomorrow: An Adventure That Has Only Just Begun

Since the first episode of these Chronicles, we have come a remarkable way. We have followed the earliest hunter-gatherers as they gazed up at the celestial vault with no instrument other than their own eyes. We have accompanied the priests of Mesopotamia as they compiled the first records of the planets, the Greek scholars seeking to understand the order of the cosmos, the Arab-Persian astronomers refining their observations, the medieval translators passing on knowledge from one civilisation to another, the Renaissance thinkers transforming our understanding of the Universe, and modern researchers constantly discovering new worlds. Yet, despite this long history, we are probably only at the beginning of our exploration of the sky.

Never before have astronomers had such powerful tools at their disposal. Telescopes installed on the highest mountain peaks observe the Universe with a precision that was unimaginable just a few decades ago. Space observatories are free from the turbulence of the Earth’s

atmosphere and detect radiation invisible to the human eye. Spacecraft continue their journey to the planets, asteroids and icy objects at the outer reaches of the solar system. Every year brings its share of unexpected discoveries.

Advances in computing are also transforming the way astronomy is conducted. Modern detectors record vast quantities of data every night. To analyse this data, researchers now use advanced statistical methods and artificial intelligence systems capable of identifying phenomena that would take the human eye years to spot. Astronomers no longer simply gaze at the sky; they are also learning to interpret vast amounts of data.

The Universe itself continues to surprise us. We now know that stars are born, live and die; that galaxies sometimes collide; that black holes lie at the heart of many galaxies; and that most of the Universe's content remains invisible. Ordinary matter – the stuff of which living beings, planets and stars are made – is thought to account for only a tiny fraction of the whole. The mysterious dark matter and dark energy are among the greatest enigmas of contemporary cosmology.

At the same time, the search for other habitable worlds is progressing rapidly. Astronomers are now analysing the light passing through the atmospheres of certain exoplanets in order to detect molecules such as water vapour, carbon dioxide or methane. No definitive evidence of life has yet been found, but observational techniques are becoming more sophisticated every year. The question that already fascinated the philosophers of antiquity therefore remains as relevant as ever: are we alone in the Universe?

This remarkable expansion of knowledge also calls for a certain degree of humility. Every major discovery in the history of astronomy has shown that the Universe is vaster, more complex and more surprising than previous generations had imagined. The certainties of one era often become the revised hypotheses of the next. This ability to question one's own models is one of the greatest strengths of the scientific method.

The history of astrology, too, has followed a unique path. For millennia, it developed in parallel with advances in astronomy, sharing with it the observation of the sky and the calculation of celestial positions. Then the two disciplines gradually went their separate ways. Astronomy devoted itself to the physical study of the Universe, whilst the various astrological traditions continued to explore the symbolic meaning of the heavens. Understanding this historical evolution helps to avoid confusion and to better appreciate the unique richness of each of these approaches.

From this perspective, mindfulness astrology offers a distinctive interpretation of this long journey. It does not regard the stars as causes acting upon human beings, but as symbols appearing in synchronicity with lived experience. Astronomical discoveries therefore do not undermine this approach; on the contrary, they enrich the symbolic language available for exploring the psyche. The more our knowledge of the heavens expands, the vaster the symbolic mirror they offer becomes.

Perhaps this is one of the most beautiful lessons of our journey. From the earliest prehistoric engravings to the space telescopes of the 21st century, human beings have never ceased to look up at the sky. The answers have changed, the instruments have been refined, knowledge

has accumulated, but the question has remained the same. What does this vast Universe tell us about the place we occupy within it?

This question will probably never have a definitive answer. Each generation formulates its own answers, then passes them on to the next. The Chronicles of Astrology recount this marvellous human adventure, made up of curiosity, observations, errors, discoveries and wonder. Above all, they remind us that the sky is not merely a subject of study. Since the dawn of our species, it has also been a travelling companion, silently accompanying our quest for understanding.

Our journey continues. In the next series, we will move away from major astronomical discoveries to gradually return to the men and women who have shaped the history of astrology. From the earliest Mesopotamian soothsayers to the great contemporary astrologers, we will explore their lives, their methods, their intuitions and the influence they have had on the evolution of a body of knowledge that has accompanied humanity for several millennia.

Season 7: The Great Ideas That Shaped Astrology

Episode 1: The Day the Individual Birth Chart Was Invented

Nowadays, when we hear about astrology, we automatically think of the natal chart. We picture a chart of the heavens drawn up for the precise moment a person is born. This practice seems so natural to us that we often forget it has not always existed. For centuries, astrologers were almost never interested in an individual's destiny. Their focus was primarily on kingdoms, cities, rulers and major collective events.

In ancient Mesopotamia, observations of the sky served mainly a political and religious purpose. Eclipses, planetary conjunctions or the appearance of comets were interpreted as omens concerning the kingdom, the ruler or the country's prosperity. Priest-astronomers observed the heavens to assist the authorities in making certain decisions or in preparing rituals designed to preserve the city's balance. The ordinary individual was almost never at the centre of this approach.

Gradually, attitudes began to change. Cultural exchanges between Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece fostered the emergence of a new way of thinking. From the final centuries before our era onwards, the focus began to shift. Astrologers were no longer concerned solely with collective events; they also sought to understand the specific circumstances of each birth.

This development represented a genuine intellectual revolution.

For the first time, the moment a human being comes into the world took on particular significance. Astronomers were now able to calculate, with increasing precision, the positions of the planets, the Sun, the Moon and the main celestial landmarks. It thus became possible to plot the configuration of the sky at a specific moment. This representation would gradually take the form of what we now call a birth chart.

The earliest known individual horoscopes appeared in Mesopotamia around the 5th century BCE. Engraved on clay tablets, they recorded the date of birth as well as the positions of several celestial bodies. They were very different from modern charts. Astrological houses did not yet occupy the place they would later come to hold, and the interpretations remained relatively brief. Yet a fundamental idea had taken root: every birth has its own celestial configuration.

When this tradition reached the Greek world, it found a particularly favourable intellectual environment. Philosophers were exploring the nature of the individual, the place of humankind in the cosmos, and the relationship between the celestial order and the earthly order. Mathematicians were refining astronomical calculations. Geometricians were developing tools to represent the movements of the celestial bodies more precisely. Individual astrology benefited from all these advances.

Over the centuries, the natal chart gradually became the heart of Western astrology. Astrologers devised new techniques of interpretation, refined the calculations of the houses, developed the study of aspects and constructed an increasingly elaborate symbolic language. The natal chart ceased to be a mere list of celestial positions. It became a

genuine symbolic map organised according to precise rules.

This evolution also marked a profound shift in the way human beings were viewed. The individual was now regarded as worthy of specific study. Their existence, character, abilities and the various dimensions of their life became subjects for reflection. This new focus was part of a broader movement within Greek philosophy that would gradually accord an ever-greater place to the individual.

Over the following centuries, the birth chart would undergo countless transformations. Calculation methods would evolve, interpretation techniques would diversify, and astrological schools would propose approaches that were sometimes very different. Yet the founding principle would remain the same: to represent the sky at a particular moment in order to derive a symbolic reading from it.

The history of the birth chart reminds us that no practice emerges suddenly in its final form. What we use today is the result of a long process of development that began over two thousand five hundred years ago. Behind every birth chart lie generations of observers, calculators, philosophers and astrologers who gradually refined this tool.

For mindfulness astrology, this history holds particular significance. The birth chart is not regarded as the cause of events nor as a programme imposed on existence. It constitutes a symbolic language that emerges in synchrony with life experience. Its value lies not in any supposed influence of the stars, but in the opportunity it offers to observe the workings of the psyche with greater clarity. Thus, whilst drawing on a tradition stretching back several

millennia, mindfulness astrology offers a profoundly renewed understanding of the natal chart.
In the next episode, we shall discover how the astrologers of antiquity gradually organised the sky into twelve sectors. Why precisely twelve houses? Where does this division, which has become universal in Western astrology, come from? Behind this familiar division lies a history far richer and more surprising than is often imagined.

Episode 2 Why does astrology have twelve houses?

When you look at a birth chart, one thing immediately catches the eye. In addition to the twelve signs of the zodiac, the circle is divided into twelve sectors known as astrological houses. Many people imagine that this structure dates back to the very origins of astrology. Yet this is not the case. The houses emerged well after the zodiac, and their history represents one of the most fascinating developments in astrological thought.
The earliest Mesopotamian horoscopes did not yet include the twelve houses as we know them today. Astrologers mainly observed the positions of the planets in the signs of the zodiac and noted certain remarkable celestial phenomena. The idea of dividing the local sky into twelve sectors linked to human experience had not yet taken shape.
This development took place gradually in the Hellenistic world, between the final centuries BC and the first centuries AD. Greek astronomers now had increasingly precise calculations enabling them to determine the

horizon, the meridian and the main celestial landmarks at the moment of birth. Using these elements, they began to organise the celestial sphere in an entirely new way.

The starting point is the ascendant, that is to say, the degree of the zodiac rising on the eastern horizon at the moment of birth. From this fundamental reference point, the sky is gradually divided into twelve sectors corresponding to the different stages of the daily rotation of the celestial sphere. This organisation makes it possible to distinguish not only the position of the planets in the zodiac, but also their position in relation to the horizon and the apparent movement of the sky.

Why were precisely twelve houses chosen?

The answer is not entirely clear. The number twelve already held a prominent place in calendars, the zodiac and many ancient traditions. It offered remarkable symbolic and mathematical coherence. Astrologers naturally extended this system by dividing the local space equally into twelve parts. This choice gradually became established until it was adopted as a common standard throughout Western astrology.

The first houses did not immediately correspond to the meanings we attribute to them today. Their interpretation developed slowly over the centuries. Greek authors, followed by Roman ones, gradually associated each house with certain areas of life: identity, resources, movement, family, creativity, work, relationships, transformations, travel, vocation, friendships and even inner life. These correspondences were the result of a long intellectual development rather than a sudden creation.

The methods for calculating the houses also evolved. Several systems emerged throughout history to take

account of the apparent motion of the celestial bodies and the geometric characteristics of the celestial sphere. Some favoured equal divisions, whilst others were based on more complex constructions. This diversity shows that astrologers have always sought to improve their tools rather than regard them as definitively established.

During the Middle Ages and then the Renaissance, the debates continued. Scholars refined the calculations thanks to advances in astronomy and mathematics. The various schools defended their methods with conviction, sometimes for several centuries. Even today, several house division systems coexist in astrological practice.

Beyond these technical differences, one idea remains constant. The houses seek to describe the way in wh an experience manifests itself in the various spheres of human life. They do not denote physical locations, but rather fields of experience that symbolically organise existence.

This distinction takes on particular significance in mindfulness astrology. Here, the houses are not interpreted as compartments of destiny in which certain events are predetermined. They represent specific contexts in which the workings of the psyche can become more visible. They indicate spaces of experience, life situations and opportunities to observe the mechanisms of identification or, conversely, the possibilities for returning to mindful presence.

The history of astrological houses reminds us that an intellectual tool can evolve over centuries before taking on the form we recognise today. Behind each sector of a birth chart lies a long succession of observations, calculations,

discussions and research carried out by generations of astronomers and astrologers.
In the next episode, we will look at another fundamental concept in astrology: aspects. Why do astrologers attach such importance to the angles between the planets? Where does this celestial geometry come from, which still underpins much of astrological interpretation today?

Episode 3: How astrologers invented planetary aspects

Today, no birth chart seems complete without an analysis of aspects. Conjunctions, oppositions, trines, squares and sextiles form part of astrologers' everyday vocabulary. Yet this way of observing the relationships between the planets has not always existed. It is the result of a long intellectual development that emerged in the Greek world from several older traditions.
The earliest Mesopotamian astrologers were primarily interested in the position of the planets in the zodiac and in notable celestial phenomena. The proximity of certain celestial bodies had already been observed, particularly during conjunctions, but the idea of a genuine geometry linking all the planets together had not yet been formulated in a systematic way.
This development emerged gradually with Hellenistic astrology. Greek scholars drew on Babylonian observations, but they also possessed a strong mathematical and geometric tradition. For them, geometric figures expressed the harmony of the cosmos. The works of Pythagoras and his disciples had already profoundly shaped this way of thinking. Numbers,

proportions and shapes were perceived as the organising principles of nature.

Within this intellectual context, astrologers began to regard the zodiacal circle as a geometric figure that could be divided according to different proportions. Two planets were no longer simply studied for their individual positions. Attention now turned to the angle separating them.

A conjunction naturally corresponds to two planets occupying virtually the same degree of the zodiac. An opposition occurs when the two celestial bodies are one hundred and eighty degrees apart. Next come the trine, based on dividing the circle into three equal parts; the square, resulting from a division into four parts; and the sextile, obtained by dividing the circle into six sectors. Gradually, a veritable celestial geometry takes shape.

These figures are not chosen at random.

They possess a mathematical elegance that fascinated the thinkers of antiquity. The equilateral triangle, the square, the hexagon and the circle were already favoured shapes in Greek geometry. Astrologers naturally extended this vision by considering that certain divisions of the zodiac express particular relationships between the planets.

The meanings attributed to these aspects developed gradually. Ancient authors observed the configurations that recurred most frequently in the charts they studied and proposed various interpretations. Over the centuries, these observations were expanded upon, debated and passed down. Aspects thus became one of the central elements of astrological interpretation.

Orbs – that is, the permitted margin around an exact angle – also emerged gradually. Astrologers noted that two

planets did not need to be separated by a perfectly exact angle to be considered in relation to one another. They therefore defined varying tolerances depending on the era, the school of thought and, at times, even the planets involved.

In the Middle Ages, Arab and then European astrologers continued this line of thought. Some introduced new aspects, whilst others debated their relative importance or the conditions under which they applied. Despite these developments, the five major aspects inherited from antiquity remain at the heart of Western astrological practice.

This history reveals a fact that is often overlooked. Aspects do not derive directly from the observation of the visible sky. When we look up at the stars, no lines connect the planets to one another. Aspects are an intellectual construct devised to represent the angular relationships between the various celestial bodies within the zodiacal circle. They bear witness to the ancients' desire to understand the heavens through the tools of geometry.

In mindfulness astrology, this origin takes on a particular significance. Aspects are not interpreted as invisible forces circulating between the planets, nor as influences acting upon human beings. They represent symbolic relationships within the birth chart, enabling us to observe certain configurations of the psyche. Their value lies in the coherence of the symbolic language they form and in their ability to shed light on the various movements of inner experience.

The history of aspects shows just how much astrology has drawn on the knowledge of its time. Greek mathematics, geometry and philosophy have profoundly influenced the

way astrologers have structured their interpretation of the heavens. Behind every aspect studied today, therefore, lies an intellectual heritage dating back more than two thousand years.
In the next episode, we shall look at another major concept of ancient astrology: planetary dignities. Why is each planet associated with certain signs rather than others? How did this system come about? Behind this now-classic classification lies one of the most elaborate symbolic structures in the entire history of astrology.

Episode 4: How astrologers conceived of planetary dignities

Among the oldest concepts in astrology is that of planetary dignities. For centuries, astrologers have spoken of domicile, exaltation, fall and exile as if they were self-evident. Yet these correspondences have not always existed. They are the result of a slow intellectual development that took shape over the centuries in the Hellenistic world before being taken up and expanded upon by Arab and medieval traditions.
The basic idea is relatively simple. Not all planets seem to express their qualities in the same way in every section of the zodiac. Ancient astrologers therefore sought to organise these differences according to an overarching logic. Their aim was not merely to draw up a list of correspondences, but to construct a coherent system in which each planet occupies a precise place within the architecture of the heavens.
The first level of this organisation is that of the domiciles. The ancients assigned to each planet one or two signs of

the zodiac, regarded as its ‘abode ’. The Sun is assigned Leo, the Moon Cancer, whilst the other planets share the remaining signs according to a remarkably symmetrical arrangement around the two luminaries. This distribution reflects a genuine quest for both geometric and symbolic balance.

This initial system was gradually expanded to include exaltations. Their origin remains a matter of debate amongst historians. Some appear to have been inherited from much older Mesopotamian traditions, whilst others were probably reinterpreted within the Greek world. Astrologers therefore considered that certain positions allowed a planet to express its nature particularly well, without necessarily corresponding to its domicile.

Through a process of symmetry, the concepts of exile and fall then emerged. If a planet has a domicile, the sign opposite it becomes its exile. If it has an exaltation, the opposite sign becomes its fall. Gradually, a perfectly ordered system took shape in which each planet maintains specific relationships with several signs of the zodiac.

Ancient astrologers further expanded this framework by developing other forms of dignities, such as triplicities, terms and decans. These subdivisions allow for a more refined interpretation and reflect the ancients’ penchant for increasingly detailed classifications. Each generation makes its own adjustments, debates certain classifications or proposes new methods of calculation.

This richness also explains the diversity of traditions. Not all authors always agree with one another. Certain dignities vary according to schools, eras or regions. Far from being set in stone from the outset, this aspect of

astrology has undergone continuous evolution for over a millennium.

Why is such importance attached to these correspondences?

Because they offered astrologers a means of assessing how a planet might be interpreted within a birth chart. They were not merely an abstract classification; they formed part of a comprehensive method of interpretation in which each element was related to the others. Dignities thus became one of the tools for assessing the coherence of the birth chart as a whole.

With the benefit of historical hindsight, it is clear that these dignities are the product of a sophisticated symbolic thought process. They do not result from an experimental discovery comparable to a law of physics. They reflect a desire to organise the heavens according to a harmonious intellectual architecture, faithful to the way in which the scholars of antiquity conceived the order of the cosmos.

This perspective naturally aligns with that of mindfulness astrology. In this approach, dignities are not interpreted as places where a planet would objectively become strong, weak, fortunate or unfortunate. They primarily reflect a historical way of structuring the symbolic language of astrology. Their value lies in the coherence they bring to the system of representation, not in the idea that they describe real influences exerted by the celestial bodies.

Studying their history also invites us to distinguish between two levels of analysis. The first relates to the history of ideas: how did the astrologers of antiquity construct this remarkable symbolic architecture? The second pertains to contemporary practice: how can we use this legacy today with discernment, taking into account

current knowledge and the evolution of our understanding of the psyche? These two questions are not to be confused, but they can engage in a fruitful dialogue.
In the next episode, we shall look at another major innovation of ancient astrology: predictive techniques. How did astrologers conceive of transits, directions, profections and solar revolutions? Behind these methods lies a long history in which the observation of time became as important as that of the celestial sphere.

Episode 5: When astrologers sought to understand time

The natal chart represents a symbolic snapshot of the sky at a precise moment in time. Very early on, however, the astrologers of antiquity realised that one question remained unanswered. If the natal chart remains identical throughout a person's life, how can we explain that certain periods seem calm whilst others are accompanied by profound changes? Why do certain events seem to occur at a specific time rather than another? This question would give rise to a whole range of techniques designed to study the passage of time.
The first attempts appeared in Hellenistic astrology. Ancient authors sought methods to link the natal chart to the different stages of life. They observed the cycles of the Sun, the Moon and the planets, devised rules of calculation and proposed several models of interpretation. Their aim was not only to describe a personality, but also to understand the rhythm according to which certain configurations seem to become more significant.

Gradually, profections developed. This method is based on a simple idea: each year of life symbolically corresponds to a different astrological house. Astrologers use this cyclical progression to highlight certain parts of the natal chart according to the person's age. This technique, which is relatively easy to calculate, became widely used in Antiquity and then in the Middle Ages.

Another important approach emerged with solar returns. Each year, the Sun returns exactly to the position it occupied at the time of birth. Astrologers then draw up a new chart corresponding to that precise moment and seek to interpret the trends for the coming year. This method became widely practised in the Arab world before being adopted by European astrologers of the Renaissance.

Progressions constitute another, far more complex family of techniques. They are based on various geometric processes designed to symbolically shift the elements of the natal chart. Primary progressions, in particular, require exceptionally intricate calculations which occupied astronomers and astrologers for many centuries. Their mathematical precision bears witness to the high level attained by the astronomical sciences of the time.

Transits, on the other hand, are based on a different idea. Astrologers observe the actual positions of the planets in the sky and compare them with those in the natal chart. Over time, this method gradually became one of the most widely used, not least because advances in ephemeris tables made the calculations much more accessible. Even today, transits remain among the techniques best known to the general public.

Remarkably, these different methods have never completely replaced one another. On the contrary, they

have accumulated over the centuries. Astrologers have often sought to combine them, believing that a given period took on greater significance when several techniques appeared to converge. This search for coherence is one of the major characteristics of traditional astrology.

History also shows that these methods have continued to evolve. Some, which were very popular for several centuries, were subsequently almost abandoned before experiencing a resurgence of interest. Others have been simplified or adapted to advances in astronomical calculations and, later, in computing. Contemporary software now makes it possible to carry out operations in a matter of seconds that once required several hours, or even several days, of work.

Above all, these techniques reveal a profoundly human question. Since ancient times, people have sought to understand the relationship between the passage of time and the changes in their lives. Astrologers have proposed various symbolic frameworks to address this question. These reflect not so much a certainty as a constant quest to give structure to the unfolding of life.

Mindfulness astrology approaches these methods from a different perspective. Transits, profections, directions and solar returns are not interpreted as mechanisms that produce events or impose a destiny. They constitute symbolic markers that appear in synchrony with certain experiences of the psyche. Their value lies in the opportunity they offer to observe more clearly the shifts in identification, periods of inner transformation and opportunities to recognise conscious presence. Thus, astrological time ceases to be a succession of foretold fates

and becomes a symbolic language accompanying the unfolding of human experience.
In the next episode, we shall discover how astrologers have gradually enriched their symbolic language by incorporating new celestial bodies. From the discovery of Uranus to contemporary research into asteroids, centaurs and trans-Neptunian objects, we shall see how each astronomical discovery has led to a rethinking of the boundaries of astrology.

Episode 6: When New Celestial Bodies Entered Astrology

For nearly two thousand years, Western astrology was built around a relatively stable set of celestial bodies. The Sun, the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn formed the core of all systems of interpretation. Astrologers were also familiar with the lunar nodes and gradually developed other symbolic tools, but the planets visible to the naked eye remained the essential framework of their practice. Many believed at the time that this structure would remain unchanged.
History decided otherwise.
In 1781, William Herschel discovered Uranus. For the first time since antiquity, a new planet had been added to the solar system. Astronomers welcomed this discovery with enthusiasm. Astrologers, however, were faced with an unprecedented question: could a planet unknown to the ancients be assigned an astrological significance?
The answers were far from immediate.
Some believed that only the seven traditional planets should be retained, arguing that the entire astrological

system rested on their balance. Others, by contrast, felt that the expansion of the solar system naturally called for an enrichment of astrology's symbolic language. The debates lasted several decades before Uranus gradually found its place within many schools of astrology.

The same situation arose in 1846 with the discovery of Neptune.

Once again, astrologers sought to understand how to incorporate this new celestial body. Proposals multiplied. Some established correspondences with the signs of the zodiac, whilst others reflected on its mythological analogies or its links with the planets already known. No central authority imposed a single interpretation . As is often the case in the history of astrology, ideas developed gradually through exchanges between practitioners.

In 1930, the discovery of Pluto opened a new chapter.

Once again, interpretations evolved slowly. The first generations of astrologers had little historical perspective to draw upon. The meanings attributed to this new planet became clearer over the decades, as observations multiplied and different authors compared their experiences.

But the surprises did not end there.

From the 19th century onwards, the four major asteroids discovered in the early 1800s — Ceres, Pallas, Juno and Vesta — also began to attract the interest of certain astrologers. Long regarded as secondary, they gradually found their place in several contemporary approaches. Their study marked a first step towards an astrology that took a greater number of celestial bodies into account.

The end of the 20th century further accelerated this development.

Astronomical discoveries followed one another at an unprecedented pace. Chiron ushered in the family of centaurs, soon joined by Pholus, Nessus, Chariklo and many others. At the same time, trans-Neptunian objects revealed that the outer reaches of the solar system are populated by an extraordinary diversity of worlds. Quaoar, Orcus, Sedna, Haumea, Makemake, Eris, Gonggong, Salacia, Ixion and numerous other objects gradually enriched our understanding of the solar neighbourhood.

Faced with this abundance, astrologers adopt a wide range of attitudes.

Some prefer to remain faithful to traditional frameworks. Others explore the new objects with enthusiasm. Still others seek criteria to distinguish those that might be of symbolic interest from those that are more a matter of astronomical curiosity. This diversity of positions shows that contemporary astrology remains a vibrant field of research where debates are still ongoing.

Computing plays a decisive role in this development. Astrological software now makes it possible to easily incorporate hundreds, or even thousands, of celestial bodies into calculations. What would have been practically impossible to achieve manually can now be done in a matter of seconds. This technical revolution is profoundly changing the possibilities available to researchers and practitioners.

However, this development raises a fundamental question. Should every new object discovered by astronomers be systematically incorporated? History shows that no simple answer has emerged. Astronomical discoveries are constantly increasing, whilst symbolic frameworks take time to mature. Astrology thus faces an unprecedented

challenge: how can it preserve the coherence of its language whilst taking into account a solar system that has become immensely richer than the one known to the ancients?

Mindfulness astrology offers an original response to this question. It does not assume that the discovery of a new celestial body automatically imposes a new influence or a new psychological category. Each celestial body is approached as a potential symbol whose meaning requires in- y research based on coherence, synchronicity, mythology, astronomical characteristics and the careful observation of human experience. The aim is therefore not to accumulate symbols, but to understand those that truly enrich the language of the psyche.

The history of this gradual opening up shows that astrology has never ceased to evolve in step with astronomical discoveries. Far from being a static system, it has constantly questioned its capacity to embrace new horizons. This dynamic continues today and will likely continue to accompany the discoveries of future generations.

In the next episode, we shall see how different schools of astrology have sometimes interpreted the same chart in very different ways. This diversity of approaches will remind us that, beyond the techniques, the history of astrology is also one of a plurality of perspectives on the same sky.

Episode 7 Why are there several forms of astrology?

When someone discovers astrology, they are often surprised by the variety of methods on offer. Some astrologers favour ancient techniques, others follow medieval traditions, whilst still others use humanistic, psychological, karmic or sidereal astrology. Interpretations can sometimes seem very different even though they are based on the same birth chart. This diversity is not a recent phenomenon. It has been part of the history of astrology for over two thousand years.

One reason for this lies in the long period over which it has evolved. Unlike a discipline developed by a single author, astrology has been built up gradually over the centuries. Each civilisation has inherited a legacy, adapted it to its own culture, enriched it with new ideas and then passed it on to the next. This process has naturally given rise to several traditions.

The first major differences were already apparent in antiquity. Mesopotamian knowledge, centred on the observation of celestial phenomena and omens, encountered Greek philosophy, which sought more to organise knowledge according to rational principles. Hellenistic astrology thus became an original synthesis of several traditions rather than a mere continuation of Babylonian traditions.

The following centuries further accentuated this diversity. Arab-Persian scholars translated Greek texts, compared them with their own astronomical observations and developed new methods of calculation. They enriched existing techniques, created new tools and, in turn, passed

this legacy on to the medieval West. Each stage introduced nuances without completely breaking with the foundations that had gone before.

During the Renaissance, the printing press facilitated a much wider dissemination of astrological works. Authors were now able to compare manuscripts from different regions, contrast traditions and propose their own syntheses. This accelerated circulation of ideas stimulated a diversity of approaches.

These transformations continued into the 19th and 20th centuries. The rise of psychology, astronomical discoveries, the emergence of new philosophical and currents, and advances in the humanities led many astrologers to radically rethink their understanding of the birth chart. Some emphasise personality, whilst others focus on life cycles, relationships, spiritual dimensions or transgenerational memories. Astrology has become a field in which many different perspectives coexist.

This diversity also extends to the tools themselves. Some practitioners use only the seven traditional planets, whilst others incorporate Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, as well as asteroids, centaurs or trans-Neptunian objects. House systems, orbs, dating techniques and methods of interpretation also vary according to different schools of thought.

This diversity should not, however, be confused with disorder. Behind these differences lie common questions. How can we understand the meaning of a birth chart? What role should free will play? How should symbols be interpreted? To what extent can an observation be generalised? Each school offers its own answers to these fundamental questions.

History thus shows that astrology is less a single system than a living tradition. Like philosophy, medicine or psychology, it has been subject to debates, controversies, reforms and challenges. This capacity to evolve partly explains its remarkable longevity.

Mindfulness astrology is also part of this history. It draws on many tools developed by previous generations, whilst marking a break on one essential point: it does not regard the stars as causes acting upon human beings. The birth chart is understood as a symbolic language that emerges in synchrony with the psyche, not as a mechanism of influence. This difference in perspective profoundly transforms the way we approach the signs, planets, houses, aspects and transits, whilst preserving the richness of the symbolic language built up over the centuries.

This development serves as a reminder of a reality that is often overlooked. Intellectual traditions remain alive when they are open to engaging with the knowledge of their own era. They are not merely a repetition of ancient models; rather, they question them, explore them in greater depth and, at times, reinterpret them. The history of astrology perfectly illustrates this dynamic.

In the next episode, we shall turn our attention to another fundamental question: why have astrologers so often linked the heavens to philosophy? From Plato to contemporary thinkers, we shall see that astrology has never developed independently of the major conceptions that civilisations have held of human beings, the world and knowledge.

Episode 8 Why are there two zodiacs?

Of all the questions raised by the history of astrology, one of the most common concerns the existence of two zodiacs. Some astrologers use the tropical zodiac, others the sidereal zodiac. Many people new to astrology are surprised to learn that the same birth can result in different planetary positions depending on which zodiac is used. This may seem strange. Yet it is the result of a long historical evolution.

Originally, there was only one point of reference. The earliest Babylonian astrologers observed the constellations visible along the Sun's apparent path. These naturally served as a reference for tracking the movement of the planets. At that time, the signs of the zodiac still corresponded fairly closely to the constellations bearing the same names.

Greek astronomers inherited this tradition, but their research gradually led them to adopt a different way of defining the start of the zodiac. Instead of taking a constellation as their starting point, they chose an astronomical phenomenon that could be easily observed every year: the vernal equinox. The first degree of Aries thus became the point at which the Sun crosses the celestial equator at the start of spring in the northern hemisphere. This reference point no longer depended directly on the stars, but on the cycle of the seasons.

This choice has several advantages.

The equinoxes and solstices are regular phenomena that naturally structure the year. They provide a stable reference point for calendars and astronomical calculations. Gradually, this method of defining the zodiac

became established in Hellenistic astrology and subsequently throughout the Western tradition.

However, a discovery would gradually complicate this apparent simplicity.

In the 2nd century BCE, Hipparchus highlighted the precession of the equinoxes. He demonstrated that the vernal equinox moves very slowly relative to the fixed stars. This movement, though extremely slow, is continuous and, over the centuries, leads to a growing discrepancy between the actual constellations and the signs of the zodiac defined by the seasons.

For a long time, this difference remained relatively small. But the centuries passed.

Today, the discrepancy stands at around twenty-four degrees. Thus, when a European astrologer states that the Sun is in the sign of Aries, it is no longer situated in front of the astronomical constellation of Aries, but in front of another region of the sky. This observation is often the source of much confusion amongst the general public.

Two traditions have emerged as a result of this development.

The tropical zodiac continues to take the vernal equinox as its starting point. The signs remain linked to the annual cycle of the seasons and each retains a fixed length of thirty degrees. It is this system that remains the standard for the vast majority of Western astrological traditions.

The sidereal zodiac follows a different logic. It seeks to maintain a direct link with the stars and constellations. To account for the precession of the equinoxes, it applies a correction known as ayanamsa, the value of which varies slightly depending on the school of thought. This approach

is mainly used in Indian astrology, where it has been the dominant tradition for many centuries.

It is important to emphasise that neither of these two zodiacs is any more ‘astronomical’ than the other in the sense in which the term is sometimes understood. Both use regular divisions of thirty degrees. The actual constellations, on the other hand, vary greatly in size and do not correspond exactly to the twelve sectors of the zodiac. Astrological signs and astronomical constellations are therefore two distinct constructs, even when they share the same names.

This distinction is often overlooked. Much debate arises from the confusion between the signs—which are symbolic divisions of the ecliptic circle—and the constellations—which are apparent groupings of stars as observed from Earth. History shows, however, that these two concepts have gradually followed different paths.

For mindfulness astrology, this development holds particular significance. The signs are not interpreted as portions of the sky exerting an influence, but as twelve fundamental symbolic modalities of human experience. The choice of a reference system therefore depends above all on the internal coherence of astrological language. From this perspective, the tropical zodiac retains its full relevance, not because it describes a higher physical reality, but because it remains organised around the rhythm of the seasons, which has been a powerful symbolic reference point since antiquity.

The history of the two zodiacs reminds us that a single tradition can give rise to several coherent ways of representing the heavens. Far from being a weakness, this diversity testifies to the richness of the research carried out

over the centuries to understand the relationships between celestial phenomena, time and human experience.
In the next episode, we shall see how astrology gradually moved away from a primarily event-based interpretation to focus more on personality, character and the inner workings of the human being. This evolution paved the way for the emergence of psychological astrology and, later, mindfulness astrology.

Episode 9: How astrology became an exploration of the psyche

For much of its history, astrology was primarily concerned with events. Astrologers sought to understand favourable or difficult periods, political changes, harvests, illnesses, journeys, marriages or the fates of rulers. The birth chart was often regarded as a means of shedding light on the course of one's life through external circumstances. Of course, ancient authors were already interested in temperament and character, but these aspects occupied a less central place than they would later come to do.
From the 19th century onwards, the intellectual landscape began to evolve. The humanities underwent considerable development. Psychology gradually established itself as an autonomous discipline, and interest in inner life grew. Questions concerning emotions, personality, deep-seated motivations and psychological conflicts took on a new, importance. This shift in perspective gradually influenced the way in which certain astrologers interpreted the natal chart.
The 20th century accelerated this transformation. Several authors proposed an interpretation focused more on how a

person functions than on predicting events. The planets were no longer interpreted solely as indicators of external circumstances; they also became symbols describing various psychological functions. The signs evoked ways of being, the houses represented areas of experience, and the aspects described the relationships between various components of the personality.

This development was fostered by the dialogue between astrology and the emerging field of psychology. The work of many psychologists led astrologers to pay greater attention to inner dynamics, defence mechanisms, deep-seated aspirations, personality contradictions and processes of transformation. The focus gradually shifted from ‘what is going to happen?’ to ‘how does this person experience life?’.

This new direction did not immediately replace traditional approaches. For several decades, the two perspectives coexisted. Some practitioners remained committed to classical methods of prediction, whilst others developed a form of astrology more focused on self-knowledge. This diversity helped to enrich the contemporary astrological landscape.

At the same time, the concept of free will takes on increasing importance in astrologers’ thinking. Whilst the astral chart primarily describes psychological tendencies, it no longer necessarily constitutes an immutable script. Many authors therefore emphasise each individual’s ability to better understand their own inner workings, to develop certain qualities and to live the various dimensions of their existence more consciously. Astrology is gradually becoming a tool for personal guidance as much as an instrument of interpretation.

This development is also changing the relationship between the astrologer and the client. The consultation often takes on greater importance than simply presenting interpretations. The exchanges become more interactive. Listening, asking questions and understanding the client's lived experience are becoming increasingly important. The birth chart is seen less and less as a verdict and more and more as a basis for dialogue.

This psychological approach brings many benefits, but it also raises new questions. To what extent can astrology and psychology be brought closer together? Do astrological symbols truly describe psychological structures, or do they constitute a language of a different nature? How can we avoid overly general interpretations or the practitioner's own projections? These questions continue to shape contemporary research today.

Mindfulness astrology is part of this evolution whilst proposing a further shift. It recognises the value of psychological interpretation, but clearly distinguishes the psyche from consciousness. The birth chart is not merely understood as a representation of psychological mechanisms; it becomes a symbolic mirror through which to observe the movements of identification, the habits of the ego, and the possibilities for returning to conscious presence. Thus, the aim is not merely to gain a better understanding of the personality, but also to recognise that which, within each of us, remains free from psychological conditioning.

This distinction opens up a new perspective. The psyche ceases to be regarded as the person's ultimate identity. It appears as a shifting manifestation of consciousness, capable of being observed with clarity. The birth chart

therefore does not define who we are; it sheds light on the ways in which the psyche manifests itself within experience. This approach profoundly renews the very meaning of astrological interpretation.
Looking at history as a whole, we see that astrology has gradually shifted its centre of gravity. Initially focused on kingdoms and collective events, then on individual destiny, it has opened up to an understanding of personality before inspiring, in some contemporary authors, a reflection on consciousness itself. This evolution testifies to astrology's ability to engage with the major questions of each era.
In the next episode, we shall broaden our perspective further by exploring the many fields in which astrology has developed over the centuries: world astrology, horary astrology, elective astrology, medical astrology, meteorological astrology and many more besides. We shall see how a single tradition has given rise to a surprisingly diverse range of applications.

Episode 10: One Astrology, Many Fields of Application

When people talk about astrology today, most immediately think of the natal chart. Yet this practice represents only one part of a much broader whole. Throughout its history, astrology has gradually diversified to address an extremely wide range of questions. This specialisation reflects not only the richness of its traditions, but also the changing needs that astrologers sought to address.

One of the first branches to develop was world astrology, sometimes referred to as the astrology of nations or communities. A direct heir to Mesopotamian traditions, it focuses on kingdoms, states, major political developments, natural phenomena and collective transformations. For many centuries, this form of astrology was even more significant than individual astrology.

As the natal chart became more widespread throughout the Hellenistic world, natal astrology gradually emerged as a discipline in its own right. It seeks to interpret the celestial configuration at the moment of birth in order to better understand the various dimensions of human experience. It is this branch that, over time, would become the most widely practised in Europe.

Another specialisation emerged in the form of horary astrology. Its principle involves drawing up a chart for the exact moment a question is asked. Astrologers believed that this symbolic configuration could shed light on the situation in question. This method underwent a particularly significant and e development during the Middle Ages and then the Renaissance, when it was used for queries as diverse as the search for a lost object, the outcome of a negotiation or the progress of a legal case.

Elective astrology pursues a different objective. Rather than interpreting a moment that has already occurred, it seeks to determine the moment considered most appropriate for undertaking an action: celebrating a wedding, setting out on a journey, signing a contract, starting a building project or launching a new venture. This practice is based on the idea that a careful choice of timing can symbolically support the planned undertaking.

Medical astrology also occupies an important place in history. For many centuries, medicine and astrology have maintained close ties. Some doctors consulted the positions of the planets to choose a date for surgery, interpret certain biological rhythms or gain a deeper understanding of the patient. These practices belong to a specific historical context, in which medical knowledge differed profoundly from that of today. They bear witness to the ancient links between the various disciplines of knowledge.

Other fields have also emerged. Meteorological astrology seeks to interpret certain climatic phenomena. Agricultural astrology focuses on the rhythms of crops and harvests. Financial astrology attempts to shed light on economic cycles. More recently, developments have emerged focusing on human relationships, businesses, communities, historical cycles or psychological research.

This diversification shows that astrology has constantly adapted to the concerns of each era. As societies evolve, new questions arise, leading to the creation of new methods or the adaptation of older tools. The history of astrology is thus one of gradual specialisation rather than that of a system that has remained unchanged.

This richness also explains why two astrologers may practise very different forms of their discipline. One may devote their work primarily to birth charts, another to horary questions, and a third to relationships, businesses or collective cycles. All use a common symbolic language, but each applies it within a specific field.

Mindfulness astrology forms part of this continuum whilst offering a specific focus. Its centre of gravity remains the natal chart, relationships, transits and the various tools for

observing the movements of the psyche in synchrony with lived experience. The other branches of astrology can, of course, be studied from this perspective, but their value no longer lies in seeking to predict or control events. They become further opportunities to explore how consciousness manifests itself through the situations of life.

This development also invites us to distinguish between the objectives pursued by the various schools. Some prioritise the forecasting of events, others psychological understanding, and still others the spiritual or symbolic dimension. This plurality is not an anomaly ; it reflects the diversity of expectations that astrology has sought to fulfil throughout its history.

As we explore these many areas of application, we come to understand that astrology has never been a monolithic discipline. Over the centuries, it has branched out, developing methods suited to very different contexts. This capacity for adaptation partly explains its remarkable longevity and the variety of traditions that have emerged from it.

In the next episode, we shall explore an equally essential aspect of this history: the criticisms, controversies and challenges that have accompanied astrology since antiquity. For a tradition spanning more than two millennia never develops without debate or questioning.

Episode 11 Two thousand years of debate: why astrology has never ceased to be a topic of discussion

Few disciplines have sparked as much debate as astrology. From antiquity to the present day, it has experienced periods of prestige, scrutiny, revival and, at times, fierce criticism. This eventful history shows that it has never been a body of knowledge universally accepted. Understanding these controversies is an integral part of the history of astrology.

The earliest discussions can be traced back to the Greek world. Some philosophers questioned whether it was possible to link the movements of the stars to human events. Others warned against an overly rigid conception of destiny, which risked curtailing human freedom of . These questions would run through the entire history of philosophy without ever receiving a single definitive answer.

The debates also concern the practice itself. Not all astrologers use the same techniques, attach the same importance to the various elements of the birth chart, or always interpret the same configurations in the same way. Since ancient times, authors have discussed methods of calculation, orbs, house systems, dignities and dating techniques. The history of astrology is also the history of these internal disagreements.

In the Middle Ages, controversies often took on a religious dimension. In several spiritual traditions, a distinction gradually emerged between the observation of celestial cycles and the idea that the stars necessarily dictated human actions. Some thinkers sought to reconcile

astrology with free will, whilst others considered that any form of determinism was incompatible with moral responsibility. These debates would leave a lasting mark on Western thought.

From the Renaissance onwards, and then with the Scientific Revolution, the nature of the criticism gradually changed. The work of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton and many other scholars profoundly transformed the physical understanding of the universe. Celestial mechanisms are now explained by the laws of gravity and mechanics. In this new context, the question takes on a different form: by what mechanism might the stars influence human beings?

This question remains central to this day. No widely accepted physical explanation has succeeded in demonstrating any influence of planetary positions on personality or individual events. This lack of a mechanism constitutes one of the main arguments put forward by contemporary critics of astrology.

At the same time, several statistical studies have sought to evaluate certain astrological claims. The results obtained have given rise to numerous methodological debates and have not led to a scientific consensus establishing the general validity of astrological interpretations. Here too, the debates continue, drawing on very different approaches.

These criticisms have, however, often had a positive effect within astrology itself. They have led many practitioners to refine their hypotheses, to distinguish more clearly between facts and interpretations, to better define their methods, and to question the underlying assumptions of

their practice. A living tradition often transforms itself in response to the questions raised about it.

The 20th century thus saw the emergence of several different responses. Some astrologers continue to defend the influence of the stars. Others favour a symbolic or psychological interpretation. Still others seek to establish links with philosophical concepts or models drawn from the human sciences. This diversity shows that the controversies have not led to a single development, but to several lines of thought.

Mindfulness astrology takes a clear stance on this fundamental question. It is not based on the assumption of a physical or causal influence of the celestial bodies. It regards the birth chart as a symbolic language that emerges in synchrony with the experience of the psyche. This approach directly addresses one of the main objections raised over the past several centuries: if the stars are not conceived as causes, the question of the mechanism of influence ceases to be the foundation of interpretation. The focus of reflection then shifts towards symbolic coherence and the observation of conscious experience.

This perspective does not put an end to the debates, but it reframes them. The questions then take on a different nature. How can synchronicity be understood? What relationship exists between the symbol and lived experience? To what extent can a symbolic language shed light on self-knowledge? These questions are more closely aligned with the philosophy of knowledge than with the search for a physical mechanism.

History ultimately shows that controversies have accompanied every major stage in the evolution of astrology. They are not a marginal episode, but one of the

driving forces behind its development. Debates compel traditions to clarify their concepts, to recognise their limitations and, at times, to profoundly renew their foundations.
In the final episode of this season, we shall take stock of this long journey through the major ideas that have shaped astrology. We shall see what has endured through the centuries, what has changed profoundly, and how these transformations set the stage for the coming seasons of our Chronicles.

Episode 12 Two thousand years of evolution: what history teaches us about astrology

As this season draws to a close, one thing is clear. The astrology we know today did not emerge fully formed at any specific point in time. It is the result of a slow intellectual development that began over two millennia ago. Each generation has received a legacy, questioned it, sometimes transformed it, and passed it on to the next. The history of astrology is therefore, above all, one of continuous evolution.
We have seen how the individual birth chart has gradually become the heart of astrological practice. We have discovered that the houses, aspects, planetary dignities and various dating techniques were not invented simultaneously, but emerged over the course of centuries. Each of these tools addressed a specific question that astrologers of their time were seeking to resolve.
We have also seen that astronomical discoveries have constantly forced astrology to reinvent itself. The discovery of Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, followed by

asteroids, centaurs and trans-Neptunian objects, has gradually expanded the symbolic language used by many practitioners. This evolution shows that astrology has never been entirely isolated from advances in astronomy, even though the two disciplines have followed different paths.

History also reveals a remarkable diversity of approaches. World astrology, natal astrology, horary astrology, elective astrology, medical astrology, relational astrology and psychological astrology address different questions. They often use the same symbols, but organise them according to distinct objectives. This plurality reminds us that it is more accurate to speak of ‘astrologies’ rather than a single, immutable ‘astrology’.

Finally, we have surveyed the major controversies that have accompanied this tradition since antiquity. Debates on determinism, free will, methods of interpretation, or the very foundations of astrology have never ceased. Far from constituting a historical weakness, these discussions bear witness to a discipline that has continually questioned its own presuppositions.

This long evolution invites a more general reflection. Great intellectual traditions remain alive only on condition that they engage in dialogue with their own era. They do not survive by endlessly repeating the same formulations; they develop by confronting their heritage with the new knowledge, new discoveries and new questions that each generation brings.

Astrology perfectly illustrates this phenomenon. Mesopotamian observations encountered Greek philosophy. Arab-Persian scholars subsequently enriched this heritage through their astronomical and mathematical

research. Medieval scholars passed this knowledge on to the Renaissance, which saw it challenged by the dawn of modern science. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in turn, introduced psychology, new astronomical discoveries and computer tools. Each era thus adds a new layer to an already ancient tradition.

Mindfulness astrology forms part of this history whilst proposing a further step forward. It does not seek to break with the centuries that preceded it, but rather to reinterpret their legacy in the light of a fundamental shift in perspective. The stars are no longer conceived as causes acting upon human beings, but as elements of a symbolic language appearing in synchrony with the movements of the psyche. This reinterpretation profoundly transforms the way we approach the signs, planets, houses, aspects, transits and other tools of astrology, without relinquishing the richness of their history.

This evolution brings to mind a key idea. Symbols are not static. Our understanding of them deepens over time as our view of human beings, consciousness and the world changes. What keeps a tradition alive is not the repetition of ancient answers, but the ability to continue asking the big questions with rigour, curiosity and openness.

Our journey is far from over. So far, we have mainly explored the birth and evolution of astrology's major ideas. From the next season onwards, we will enter a particularly fruitful period in this history: the golden age of Arab-Persian astrology. Between the 8th and 13th centuries, scholars of extraordinary erudition translated Greek works, perfected astronomical calculations, developed new astrological techniques and passed on to the medieval West a legacy that would have a lasting

influence on all of Western astrology. This intellectual adventure, often little known to the general public, constitutes one of the most fascinating chapters in our history.

And so this seventh series comes to an end. Looking back at the journey from the earliest nights of prehistory to contemporary debates, one thing becomes clear: the history of astrology is inseparable from the history of human curiosity. It tells not so much of a succession of certainties as of a long quest for understanding, in which each era has sought, in its own way, to make sense of the silent dialogue between the heavens and human experience.

Season 8: The Golden Age of Astrology in the Arab-Persian World

Episode 1: Baghdad and the House of Wisdom: when the world's knowledge came together

In the early 8th century, the world's intellectual centre gradually shifted towards the Arab-Muslim world. Whilst Europe was undergoing a period of profound political upheaval, a vast movement of research, translation and scholarship was developing within the Abbasid Caliphate. A new capital was founded on the banks of the Tigris: Baghdad. Within a few decades, it became one of the world's greatest cities and an exceptional centre for science, philosophy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy and astrology.

At the heart of this vibrant scene emerged an institution known as the House of Wisdom. Its development was particularly fostered during the reign of Caliph Al-Ma'mūn in the 9th century. More than just a library, the House of Wisdom brought together translators, astronomers, mathematicians, physicians, philosophers and scholars from a wide variety of regions. There, ideas were exchanged, manuscripts were compared, calculations were verified and original research was carried out.

One of the institution's major aims was to bring together the knowledge inherited from the great civilisations that had preceded it. Greek works on astronomy and philosophy were translated into Arabic. Persian traditions were studied in detail. Indian knowledge, particularly in the fields of mathematics and astronomy, also enriched the research. Baghdad thus became a vast intellectual

crossroads where cultures that had, until then, often developed separately engaged in dialogue.

This translation work represented a considerable undertaking. Ancient manuscripts were sought out in various regions of the Mediterranean world. Translators did not merely convert texts from one language to another; they commented on them, compared them, sometimes corrected copying errors and discussed their interpretations. Knowledge was therefore not simply preserved; it was continually re-examined.

Astronomy played a central role in this collective endeavour. Scholars observed the heavens with remarkable precision, refined measuring instruments and compiled new astronomical tables. These observations made it possible to improve calculations of planetary positions, determine the length of the year more accurately and gain a better understanding of the apparent movements of the celestial bodies. These advances directly benefited astrologers, whose work depended on the quality of the available astronomical data.

Mathematics, too, underwent spectacular development. Calculation methods were refined, algebra flourished, and trigonometric techniques became increasingly sophisticated. These advances considerably facilitated astronomical and astrological calculations, which would have been far more difficult without these new tools.

Astrology naturally found its place within this vast intellectual movement. Arab-Persian scholars inherited the Greek and Hellenistic traditions, but they did not merely replicate them. They debated them, systematised them, explored them in greater depth and developed new methods. Several of the techniques that would leave a

lasting mark on Western astrology took their definitive form during this period.

It is important to remember that the boundaries between disciplines were much less distinct then than they are today. A single scholar might be a physician, astronomer, mathematician, philosopher and astrologer all at once. This constant flow of knowledge fostered remarkable intellectual creativity. Ideas progressed through constant dialogue with one another.

Baghdad's influence extended far beyond the borders of the Caliphate. Manuscripts circulated as far as Muslim Spain, and then on to major centres of translation such as Toledo. From the 12th century onwards, numerous Arabic works were translated into Latin and found their way into European libraries. A vital part of ancient knowledge, enriched by several centuries of Arab-Persian scholarship, thus returned to Europe, where it would play a decisive role in the development of medieval universities.

This history serves as a reminder that knowledge knows no lasting borders. It travels with people, languages, manuscripts and exchanges between civilisations. The House of Wisdom perfectly illustrates this dynamic. It was not merely a place for preserving the past; it was a e laboratory where ancient legacies were confronted with new ideas, giving rise to advances that would shape several centuries of research.

For the history of astrology, this period marked a decisive moment. Without the work carried out by the Arab-Persian translators, astronomers and astrologers, a large proportion of the Greek texts would probably have been lost. Moreover, these scholars did not merely preserve a

heritage: they developed it. Subsequent generations would inherit a tradition profoundly enriched by their research.
In the next episode, we shall discover how the great translators of that era saved hundreds of Greek, Persian and Indian works from oblivion. Their patient work of translation and commentary not only preserved an immense intellectual heritage, but also paved the way for new discoveries in astronomy and astrology.

Episode 2: The translators who saved the knowledge of Antiquity

When we open a book on ancient astronomy or astrology today, we often overlook the obvious: these texts could very well have been lost. Manuscripts were copied by hand onto fragile materials, vulnerable to fire, war, floods and the ravages of time. The destruction of a single library could wipe out centuries of research. If a significant portion of the knowledge of antiquity has survived to the present day, it is largely thanks to the patient work of several generations of translators.
From the 8th century onwards, the Abbasid rulers encouraged a vast translation movement. Greek, Syriac, Persian and Indian manuscripts were sought out across many regions of the Near East. They were transported to Baghdad, where teams of scholars set about translating them into Arabic. This undertaking constituted one of the greatest efforts to transmit knowledge in all of history.
Among these scholars was Hunayn ibn Ishaq, renowned for his work on medical and philosophical texts. Although his work focused primarily on these fields, he perfectly exemplified the method employed by the great translators

of his time. He compared several manuscripts, sought out the most reliable versions, corrected copying errors and took care to convey the authors' meaning as accurately as possible.

This method went far beyond mere word-for-word translation. Scholars compared different versions of the same text, sometimes adding commentaries, explaining certain difficult passages and proposing corrections when astronomical observations showed that a piece of information needed revising. The manuscripts thus became living works, continually enriched by those who transmitted them.

Works on astronomy held a privileged place within this vast movement. The writings of Claudius Ptolemy, Hipparchus of Nicaea and other Greek scholars were translated, studied and annotated. Arab-Persian astronomers did not regard them as untouchable authorities. They verified their calculations, continued their observations and gradually improved many of their methods.

Astrology benefited directly from this activity. Hellenistic treatises were translated with the same care. Techniques of interpretation, methods of calculation and symbolic classifications were studied in depth. Astrologers thus had access to a much vaster intellectual heritage than they would have had without this translation work.

These exchanges were not limited to Greek traditions. Knowledge from Persia and India also enriched the research. Certain astronomical methods, various calculation techniques and different conceptions of time and cycles complemented the existing body of knowledge.

Baghdad became a veritable meeting place for several great scholarly civilisations.

This diversity fostered a particularly fertile intellectual climate. Scholars did not merely seek to preserve the past; they also wished to understand, compare and make progress. Debates were rife. Calculations were revisited. Instruments were perfected. Observations were cross-checked against ancient texts. Knowledge advanced through an ongoing dialogue between tradition and experience.

This trend towards translation also had an unexpected effect. By bringing together works from different cultures within a single language, it became possible to directly compare ideas that had previously remained separate for centuries. This comparison stimulated innovation. Both astronomers and astrologers now had a much broader perspective on their disciplines.

From the 12th century onwards, a new phase began. The major translation centres on the Iberian Peninsula, particularly in Toledo, translated some of the Arabic works into Latin. It was therefore often the Arabic versions that enabled European scholars to rediscover the Greek works of antiquity. Knowledge thus undertook an astonishing journey: from Greece to the Arab-Persian world, and then from the Arab-Persian world to the West.

The history of translators teaches us a vital lesson. Great discoveries are not solely the work of those who invent. They owe much to those who preserve, explain, pass on and make knowledge accessible to future generations. Without these unassuming intermediaries, much of humanity’s intellectual history would probably have been lost.

For mindfulness astrology, this history also serves as a reminder that all research forms part of a continuum. To innovate does not mean erasing the past, but knowing it well enough to be able to reinterpret it in the light of new understandings. The translators of Baghdad carried out this work in an exemplary manner. They respected ancient legacies whilst paving the way for new interpretations.
In the next episode, we shall meet one of the most influential figures in the entire history of astrology: Abu Ma'shar. His works, translated into many languages, would exert a profound influence on astrology practised in the Arab-Persian world, and subsequently on that of the medieval West for several centuries.

Episode 3 Abu Ma'shar: the astrologer who influenced the Arab-Persian world and the West

In the 9th century, as Baghdad had become one of the world's greatest centres of learning, a man was about to bring about a lasting transformation in the history of astrology. His name was Abu Ma'shar al-Balkhi. Born in Persia around 787, he initially received an education focused on religious studies and the intellectual tradition of his time. There was as yet no indication that he would become one of the most famous astrologers in history.
According to several ancient accounts, his interest in astronomy and astrology developed relatively late in life. Eager to gain a better understanding of certain philosophical debates, he undertook the study of mathematics and the observation of the heavens. What was intended merely as a supplementary part of his education quickly became the focus of his research. He then devoted

several decades to studying the Greek, Persian and Indian works available in the libraries of Baghdad.

Abu Ma'shar lived in an exceptional era. Major translation projects were already well under way. The works of Ptolemy, Hellenistic traditions and astronomical knowledge from various civilisations were now accessible in Arabic. This situation provided him with a remarkably rich body of literature, unrivalled in previous centuries.

His body of work is considerable. He wrote numerous treatises devoted to the foundations of astrology, planetary conjunctions, the cycles of the years, horary astrology and world astrology. His works bear witness to a constant endeavour to organise the knowledge inherited from the past whilst developing it further. He did not merely comment on ancient authors; he offered original syntheses and explored various methods of interpretation in greater depth.

Among his most famous works are his studies on the great conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn. Astrologers had long been interested in these planetary alignments, but Abu Ma'shar accorded them particular importance in the study of major historical developments. This approach was to exert a lasting influence on medieval and Renaissance astrologers, who drew extensively on his analyses.

His work is also distinguished by a remarkable philosophical ambition. Abu Ma'shar sought to demonstrate that astrology could be integrated into a coherent vision of the cosmos inherited from Greek philosophy, whilst engaging with the thought of his own era. He endeavoured to articulate astronomical observations, mathematical reasoning and astrological

interpretations into a whole that was as harmonious as possible.

This approach contributed greatly to his prestige. His books circulated throughout the Arab-Persian world, where they were copied, annotated and studied for several centuries. From the 12th century onwards, several of them were translated into Latin. European universities thus discovered a form of astrology far more developed than that which they had previously known. Throughout the Middle Ages, the name of Abu Ma'shar remained an indispensable reference for Western astrologers.

His influence extended even beyond the field of astrology itself. Historians of science now emphasise that his works bear witness to the high standard achieved by the astronomical and mathematical research of his time. They illustrate how Arab-Persian scholars were able to build upon the ancient legacy whilst making their own contributions.

Like many great authors, however, Abu Ma'shar is not universally acclaimed. Some of his contemporaries questioned certain interpretations or the importance he attached to particular techniques. This diversity of viewpoints demonstrates once again that the history of astrology is as much about debate as it is about the transmission of knowledge.

With the benefit of hindsight, his role becomes clear. He served as a bridge between several worlds. As the heir to Greek, Persian and Indian traditions, he in turn became one of the principal conduits for this knowledge to the medieval West. Few astrologers have exerted such a lasting influence on such diverse civilisations.

Mindfulness astrology naturally invites us to distinguish between Abu Ma'shar's historical contribution and contemporary interpretations. His work represents a major milestone in the development of classical astrology. It bears witness to an immense effort to achieve intellectual coherence and organise knowledge. Conversely, the modern understanding of synchronicity, the psyche and consciousness now leads us to reinterpret several of the explanatory foundations of this tradition. This distinction allows us to recognise the full historical significance of his work without confusing his legacy with adherence to all his presuppositions.

Finally, the story of Abu Ma'shar reminds us that great intellectual figures often emerge when several traditions converge. His genius lay not only in his personal erudition, but in his ability to foster a dialogue between legacies from different civilisations.

In the next episode, we shall meet another great scholar of this period, Al-Kindi. As much a philosopher as an astronomer, he sought to give astrology a place within a much broader reflection on nature, mathematics and knowledge.

Episode 4: Al-Kindi – when philosophy met astrology

In the 9th century, Baghdad was home to some of the greatest minds of its time. Among them stood out one exceptional figure: Al-Kindi. Often referred to as 'the philosopher of the Arabs', he did not confine himself to a single discipline. He wrote on philosophy, mathematics, medicine, music, optics, geometry, astronomy and

astrology. His work perfectly illustrates the ideal of the universal scholar that characterised this period.

Born around 801 into an influential family in Kufa, Al-Kindi received a particularly comprehensive education. From a very early age, he took an interest in Greek texts that had recently been translated into Arabic. The works of Aristotle, Euclid and Ptolemy fuelled his thinking. But he was not content merely to comment on them. His ambition was to show that different forms of knowledge could be organised coherently within a single worldview.

For Al-Kindi, mathematics played a fundamental role. It constituted the primary language for understanding natural phenomena. This conviction profoundly influenced his approach to astronomy and astrology. Precise calculations of celestial movements were not merely useful for compiling astronomical tables; they contributed to a rational understanding of the order of the cosmos.

In several of his treatises, Al-Kindi sought to explain how celestial phenomena might be linked to terrestrial phenomena. His reflections are set within the scientific context of his time, when many scholars believed that the Universe formed a profoundly unified whole. In particular, he developed a theory of rays, according to which all bodies emit influences that interact with one another. This conception was to exert a lasting influence on certain medieval authors, even though it was not confirmed by subsequent developments in the physical sciences.

The historical significance of this theory is considerable. It shows that 9th-century scholars were not merely seeking to pass on ancient traditions; they were also attempting to provide an explanatory framework for them that was compatible with the knowledge available in their own

time. Astrology did not appear to them as a collection of isolated formulas, but as part of a much broader reflection on the nature of the world.

Al-Kindi also played a part in the great translation movement that characterised the Abbasid Caliphate. He encouraged the study of Greek texts and helped to disseminate them amongst scholarly circles. His influence quickly extended beyond the boundaries of his own era. From the 12th century onwards, several of his works were translated into Latin. European thinkers then discovered his works on philosophy, mathematics and astronomy. Some of his ideas were debated in medieval universities for several centuries, a testament to the significance they had acquired in intellectual history.

With the benefit of hindsight, Al-Kindi appears less as a specialist in astrology than as a thinker concerned with knowledge. He constantly sought to link the various disciplines together. This drive for unification explains why he remains a major figure in the history of medieval science as well as in that of philosophy.

The history of his work also serves as a reminder of how scientific explanations evolve over time. The hypotheses put forward by Al-Kindi addressed the questions of his era and were based on the knowledge available at the time. The centuries that followed would lead to the development of other physical models, profoundly altering our understanding of natural phenomena. This evolution in no way detracts from the historical significance of his intellectual endeavour, which bears witness to a genuine desire to construct a coherent worldview.

In the context of mindfulness astrology, Al-Kindi occupies a unique position. His work illustrates the search for a

theoretical foundation intended to explain the correspondences between the heavens and the Earth. The perspective of mindfulness takes a different path. It does not seek to establish a causal mechanism linking the stars to events or to the psyche. It draws on the principle of synchronicity, according to which celestial configurations and human experiences appear as parallel expressions of the same reality, without any cause-and-effect relationship. This difference shows how the same question can elicit profoundly different answers depending on the era.

Al-Kindi's legacy remains, however, invaluable. It serves as a reminder that the history of ideas progresses thanks to thinkers who dare to connect seemingly disparate fields. Philosophy, mathematics, astronomy and astrology are in constant dialogue within his work.

In the next episode, we shall meet Al-Biruni, one of the greatest encyclopaedists of the Middle Ages. An astronomer, geographer, mathematician, historian and tireless observer, he embodied a new way of studying the heavens, based on precise measurements and critical thinking, thereby marking a crucial stage in the evolution of science and astrology.

Episode 5: Al-Biruni – the scholar who wanted to verify everything

At the turn of the 11th century, one of the greatest scientific figures of the Middle Ages emerged: Al-Biruni. Few scholars have left behind such a vast and diverse body of work. An astronomer, mathematician, geographer, historian, pharmacologist, linguist and tireless observer,

Al-Biruni devoted his life to understanding the world with exceptional rigour. His writings bear witness to an intellectual curiosity that spanned almost every field of knowledge of his time.

Born in 973 in the Khwarezm region of Central Asia, he grew up in an environment where Greek, Persian and Arabic scientific traditions converged. From a very young age, he showed a remarkable aptitude for mathematics and the observation of the heavens. His talents quickly attracted the attention of several rulers, who supported his research and granted him access to the finest centres of learning of his time.

What sets Al-Biruni apart from many earlier authors is his method. He never regarded an ancient text as definitive truth. When studying a manuscript, he sought to test it against available observations, measurements and accounts. If a calculation seemed inaccurate to him or a claim insufficiently substantiated, he did not hesitate to point this out. This critical attitude already foreshadowed certain principles of the modern scientific method. His astronomical works are particularly impressive. He refined the methods for determining the latitude of locations, improved several calculations relating to celestial movements and contributed to the development of trigonometry as applied to astronomy. His measurements of the Earth’s circumference were remarkably precise for his time.

Al-Biruni was also interested in different cultural traditions. He travelled to India, where he studied local texts, languages, beliefs and scientific knowledge in detail. His famous work on Indian civilisation remains a valuable source for historians to this day. He constantly sought to

understand other cultures from within rather than judging them by the standards of his own.

This open-mindedness is evident in his work on astronomy and astrology. He brought together Greek, Persian, Indian and Arabic knowledge, comparing their methods and highlighting both their similarities and differences. His work thus constitutes a veritable encyclopaedia of the astronomical and astrological knowledge of his time.

Among his writings is an important treatise on astrology, in which he presents with great clarity the techniques used by practitioners of his time. He sets out the calculations, describes the main methods and explains the specialist vocabulary with remarkable precision. His aim was less to defend a doctrine than to faithfully convey the state of knowledge at the time. Thanks to this approach, his work remains today a historical source of the very highest order for understanding medieval astrology.

Al-Biruni, however, displays remarkable caution. He carefully distinguishes between astronomical observations, which can be verified, and astrological interpretations, which belong to a different realm. This distinction is particularly modern. It shows that even within the Arab-Persian world, certain scholars were fully aware of the difference between the precision of celestial calculations and the diversity of symbolic interpretations.

His influence extends far beyond his own century. His works circulated in numerous intellectual centres and were consulted for several generations. Historians of science now regard him as one of the greatest encyclopaedists of the Middle Ages— —capable of bringing together an extremely wide range of knowledge whilst maintaining a critical eye on each aspect.

For mindfulness astrology, Al-Biruni offers a particularly valuable lesson. His constant endeavour to distinguish observable facts from interpretations calls for great intellectual rigour. Similarly, mindfulness astrology clearly distinguishes between astronomical data—which are based on observation and calculation—and the symbolic language of the birth chart, which is based on an interpretation grounded in synchronicity rather than physical causality. This distinction allows us to honour both the precision of astronomy and the unique nature of symbolic interpretation.

The story of Al-Biruni also reminds us that true curiosity goes hand in hand with humility. The more knowledge he accumulated, the more he realised the extent of what remained to be understood. This attitude undoubtedly explains the modernity of his work. He did not seek to impose certainties, but to continually deepen the quality of his observations and reasoning.

Episode 6 The Arabic Parts: an invention… that did not originate in Arabia

Among the many techniques used by astrologers, the Arabic Parts hold a special place. Their name suggests that they may have been invented in the Arab world during the Middle Ages. However, the history is more nuanced. The first Parts appeared well before that time, in Hellenistic astrology during the final centuries BC. It was the Arab-Persian scholars who developed them, expanded upon them and made them known throughout much of the medieval world.

The most famous of these is the Part of Fortune. Greek authors were already using it to complement the study of the natal chart. Its calculation is based on a geometric construction involving the positions of the Sun, the Moon and the Ascendant. This method reflects the desire of ancient astrologers to explore new symbolic relationships within the astrological chart itself.

From the 8th century onwards, Arab-Persian astrologers took up this legacy. They did not confine themselves to preserving the Parts already known; they developed many others corresponding to various areas of life: relationships, material possessions, health, travel, knowledge, career, children and even spiritual matters. Over the centuries, their number increased considerably.

This development can be partly explained by the way in which scholars of that era conceived the geometry of the birth chart. Every planet, every angle and every house could be linked through precise calculations. The Parts thus became points constructed from the distances separating different elements of the chart. They did not correspond to observable celestial bodies, but to positions calculated according to geometric rules.

This approach reveals remarkable intellectual creativity. Medieval astrologers sought to develop an ever-richer symbolic language by exploring the internal relationships within the birth chart. The Parts constitute one of the most elaborate expressions of this approach. They demonstrate that astrology was not limited to observing the stars; it also constructed abstract tools designed to refine interpretation.

However, this proliferation soon gave rise to difficulties. The more Parts there were, the more complex their use became. Not all astrologers adopted the same calculations

or the same meanings. Some Parts gradually fell into oblivion, whilst others continued to be used for several centuries. This diversity reflects the richness, but also the growing complexity, of the medieval astrological tradition.

When Arabic texts were translated into Latin from the 12th century onwards, these techniques found their way into European universities and courts. Western astrologers adopted part of this heritage and took up the term ‘Arabic Parts’, although their origins are in fact much older. This name has remained associated with these geometric constructions to this day.

Historians of astrology now prefer to use the terms ‘lots’ or ‘Hellenistic lots’ when referring to the earliest forms of this technique. This terminology serves as a reminder that the foundations of these calculations date back to Greek antiquity. The term ‘Arabic Parts’ nevertheless retains historical significance, as it bears witness to the vital role played by Arab-Persian scholars in their dissemination and development.

This history illustrates a common phenomenon in the evolution of knowledge. An idea arises in one civilisation, is developed further in another, and then returns, transformed, to its point of origin. The Arabic Parts are an excellent example of this constant, circulation of knowledge between Greece, the Arab-Persian world and the medieval West.

In the context of mindfulness astrology, these geometric constructions are first and foremost regarded as symbolic creations developed by astrologers throughout history. They bear witness to a constant quest to enrich the language of the birth chart. Their significance therefore

lies not in the supposed existence of an invisible point exerting a particular influence, but in the symbolic coherence that these calculations can provide when used with discernment. As with all astrological tools, their meaning is rooted in an interpretation based on synchronicity rather than on physical causality.

The Arabic Parts also remind us that the history of astrology is a history of intellectual inventions. Astrologers did not merely observe the sky; they devised new ways of organising symbols, linking the elements of the birth chart and exploring the many dimensions of human experience. This creativity largely explains the richness and diversity of astrological traditions.

In the next episode, we shall see how Arab-Persian astronomers perfected observational instruments, astronomical tables and methods of calculation. These technical advances would profoundly transform the accuracy of astrological charts and pave the way for the great discoveries of the Renaissance.

Episode 7: When astronomers made the heavens more precise

Ever since the earliest observers in Mesopotamia, astronomers have constantly sought to measure the heavens with greater precision. Each generation improved upon the observations of the previous one, corrected certain calculations and refined the available instruments. During the golden age of the Arab-Persian world, this endeavour reached remarkable heights. The progress made between the 9th and 13th centuries would permanently

transform astronomy and provide astrology with far more reliable computational foundations.

One of the great strengths of the scholars of this era lay in their determination to compare ancient texts with direct observations. Ptolemy's works continued to be studied with immense respect, but they were not regarded as infallible. When discrepancies arose between theoretical calculations and observations of the sky, several astronomers set about verifying the data and proposing new figures.

To carry out this research, proper observatories were gradually built. These establishments did not resemble modern observatories equipped with telescopes – which did not yet exist – but they possessed instruments of great sophistication for their time. There, astronomers tracked the movements of the Sun, the Moon and the planets with exceptional regularity, sometimes for several decades.

Among the most famous instruments was the astrolabe. Inherited from antiquity and subsequently considerably refined in the Arab-Persian world, it enabled astronomers to determine the position of celestial bodies, measure celestial altitudes, solve numerous problems in astronomical geometry and even estimate the time based on the position of the Sun or the stars. A true analogue computer ahead of its time, the astrolabe became one of the symbols of medieval science.

Quadrants, armillary spheres, gnomons and other measuring instruments also underwent significant improvements. Craftsmen vied with one another in ingenuity to produce ever more precise instruments, whilst astronomers developed increasingly sophisticated methods of calculation. This alliance between technology

and mathematics was one of the key drivers of scientific progress during this period.

The accumulated observations made it possible to compile new astronomical tables, known as *zij*. These works brought together the positions of the celestial bodies, the parameters required for calculations and a wealth of data useful to astronomers. Each new generation of tables sought to correct the inaccuracies of its predecessors. Several of them remained standard references for many centuries, both in the Arab-Persian world and in Europe.

Astrology benefits directly from these advances. Astrological charts can now be calculated with a precision previously unheard of. The positions of the planets, the Sun and Moon, and the main celestial landmarks have become more reliable. Astrologers thus have a much more solid astronomical basis on which to build their interpretations.

This development illustrates a fundamental principle of the history of science. Theoretical progress often depends on technical progress. Without more sophisticated instruments, it would have been impossible to improve observations. Without more precise observations, calculations would have remained approximate. And without reliable calculations, astronomical tables would never have attained the degree of accuracy for which they are renowned.

Historians now emphasise that this research paved the way for several major developments of the European Renaissance. Western astronomers would inherit sophisticated instruments, tried-and-tested mathematical methods and astronomical tables of remarkable quality. A

significant part of this legacy would subsequently be utilised by the great scholars of the following centuries.

For mindfulness astrology, this history allows us to distinguish between two complementary levels. On the one hand, astronomical calculations form part of a science of observation, measurement and precision. They can be verified, improved and corrected as new discoveries are made. On the other hand, astrological interpretation is a matter of symbolic language. The more accurate the astronomical data, the more faithful the representation of the heavens; but this accuracy does not in itself imply a causal link between the celestial bodies and events. It simply ensures that the symbol is based on a rigorous description of the celestial configuration.

This distinction explains why advances in astronomy have always been invaluable to astrologers, regardless of their philosophical views. A symbol only has meaning if it is based on correct al observation. The accuracy of the calculations thus forms the common foundation upon which very different interpretations can subsequently develop.

In the next episode, we shall follow the journey of this knowledge to Europe. We shall see how translations produced in Spain and Sicily enabled Western scholars to rediscover ancient astronomy and astrology, enriched by several centuries of research carried out in the Arab-Persian world.

Episode 8: The Great Journey of Knowledge to the West

For several centuries, Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Córdoba and other major Arab-Persian intellectual centres amassed an exceptional body of knowledge. Greek, Persian and Indian manuscripts were translated, studied, annotated and expanded upon there. But the story of this knowledge does not end there. From the 11th century onwards, a new wave of transmission began. These works embarked on a long journey to the West, where they would bring about lasting changes to science, philosophy, medicine, astronomy and astrology.

One of the main hubs of this transmission was the city of Toledo, on the Iberian Peninsula. After its reconquest by the Christian kingdoms in 1085, the city retained a significant Muslim and Jewish population, as well as rich libraries. Scholars from all over Europe travelled there to study the works preserved in Arabic. Toledo very quickly became one of the greatest centres of translation in the Middle Ages.

The work carried out there was remarkable. Translators often worked in teams. Some were proficient in Arabic, others in Latin, and sometimes also in Hebrew or the Romance languages. Together, they translated hundreds of works on mathematics, medicine, philosophy, astronomy and astrology.

The works of Ptolemy, Abu Ma'shar, Al-Kindi, Al-Biruni and many other authors gradually became accessible to European scholars. For many of them, this was a genuine rediscovery. The original Greek manuscripts had often long since disappeared from Europe. The Arabic versions,

enriched with commentaries and corrections, now provided access to this immense intellectual heritage.

Sicily also played an important role in this circulation of knowledge. Situated at the crossroads of the Latin, Greek and Arabic worlds, it fostered exchanges between different cultural traditions. The Norman rulers encouraged the presence of scholars from diverse backgrounds, creating a climate conducive to the translation and dissemination of knowledge.

This transmission did not consist merely of copying ancient texts. European scholars studied the translations, compared them with their own observations, and began to produce new commentaries. Knowledge thus continued to evolve. Each generation added its own reflections to those of its predecessors, perpetuating a dynamic of research that had begun several centuries earlier.

The fledgling universities enthusiastically embraced this wealth of new knowledge. In Paris, Bologna, Oxford, Montpellier and many other cities, students discovered disciplines that had been profoundly revitalised. Mathematics became more precise, medicine was enriched by new sources of knowledge, Aristotelian philosophy experienced a considerable resurgence, and astronomy benefited from far more sophisticated computational tools. Astrology, too, benefited from this intellectual renaissance. European practitioners now had access to works far more comprehensive than those of their predecessors. Techniques diversified, calculations became more precise, and theoretical debates multiplied. This period directly paved the way for the development of medieval Western astrology, which would reach its peak between the 13th and 15th centuries.

This long journey of knowledge serves as a reminder of a truth that is often forgotten. Major intellectual advances are rarely the product of a single civilisation. They arise from encounters, translations, exchanges and dialogues between different cultures. The manuscripts arriving in Toledo already carried within them several centuries of history. Many were of Greek origin, enriched by Arab-Persian scholars, and subsequently interpreted by European scholars. They bear witness to a profoundly collective endeavour.

Historians now regard this period as one of the great moments of knowledge exchange in human history. Without these translations, a significant part of ancient philosophy, Greek mathematics, astronomy and astrology would probably have remained inaccessible to the medieval West. This transmission laid the groundwork for the intellect s that would make the great transformations of the Renaissance possible.

For the astrology of mindfulness, this history holds particular significance. It reminds us that all knowledge is a shared heritage. No school of thought arises in isolation. Each generation receives tools, examines them, transforms them and then passes them on in turn. What matters, therefore, is not merely to preserve traditions, but to understand how they were formed so that we may reinterpret them with discernment and creativity.

In the next episode, we shall discover that this period of intellectual prosperity was not without its debates. Arab-Persian scholars, too, pondered the relationships between philosophy, religion, astronomy and astrology. These discussions, often of great depth, would have a lasting

influence on the way subsequent generations conceived of astrology's place within knowledge.

Episode 9 Philosophy, spirituality and astrology: the great debates of Arab-Persian civilisation

When we speak of the scientific golden age of Arab-Persian civilisation, we sometimes imagine a time when all scholars shared the same ideas. The reality was quite different. The 9th to 13th centuries were characterised by an extraordinary diversity of intellectual currents. Philosophers, astronomers, physicians and astrologers debated numerous fundamental questions. Among these was a question that has accompanied the history of astrology since antiquity: what relationship can truly exist between the heavens and human life?

These discussions took on particular significance in a civilisation where philosophical and theological reflection occupied a central place. Thinkers sought to reconcile the Greek heritage with the great religious questions. How might one understand the order of the cosmos? To what extent can natural phenomena be studied by reason? What scope is there for human freedom if one accepts that the Universe possesses an intelligible order?

The answers are far from uniform. Some scholars regard astronomy as a rigorous science based on observation and calculation, whilst astrology is seen more as an interpretative art whose limitations must be acknowledged. Others, on the contrary, believe that celestial configurations can contribute to a better understanding of certain aspects of the natural world, whilst rejecting the idea of an absolutely fixed destiny.

Among the most influential philosophers was Avicenna. Whilst acknowledging the excellence of the astronomical work of his time, he expressed significant reservations regarding several of astrology's claims. In his view, the complexity of the causes at work in earthly phenomena makes it very difficult to make any certain assertion based solely on celestial configurations. His viewpoint was to exert a lasting influence on philosophical debates.

A few decades later, Averroes also engaged in an in-depth examination of the relationship between philosophy, nature and the knowledge inherited from the Ancients. Like many thinkers of his time, he distinguished between those areas where rational demonstration can provide certainties and those where caution remains necessary. His commentaries on Aristotle were to profoundly influence European universities.

These discussions did not call into question the importance of astronomy. On the contrary, everyone recognised the need for precise observations and rigorous calculations. The debates centred mainly on the interpretation of celestial phenomena and on the limits that could reasonably be placed on such interpretation.

This distinction helped to advance knowledge. Astronomers refined their instruments, improved their calculation tables and carried out more observations. Philosophers analysed the principles of causality. Other thinkers reflected on the notions of providence and freedom. Astrologers, for their part, sought to refine their methods and better define the scope of their discipline. Each field advanced through dialogue with the others.

This intellectual effervescence serves as a reminder that great scientific civilisations are also civilisations of

debate. Ideas do not progress solely through discoveries, but also through the objections, criticisms and discussions they provoke. In this respect, the Arab-Persian civilisation offers a remarkable example of intellectual plurality.

Historians today emphasise that these debates contributed significantly to the transmission of a method based on the critical examination of arguments. When Arabic works were translated into Latin, it was not only astronomical or astrological knowledge that reached Europe, but also a d way of reasoning, of comparing hypotheses and of testing ideas against one another.

For mindfulness astrology, this history holds particular resonance. The questions raised by medieval philosophers regarding causality, free will and the limits of interpretation remain entirely relevant today. The proposed answer, however, is different. By rejecting the idea of a causal influence of the stars, mindfulness astrology adopts a perspective in which the birth chart is understood as a symbolic language appearing in synchronicity with the psyche. This approach allows us to preserve the fundamental freedom of consciousness whilst recognising the value of the symbol as a tool for inner observation.

The study of this period also shows that the search for truth does not advance by eliminating questions, but by exploring them in greater depth. Scholars of the Arab-Persian world never ceased to question the relationships between the heavens, nature and humankind. Their answers were diverse, sometimes contradictory, but all shared the same ambition: to understand the world as rigorously as possible.

In the next episode, we shall take stock of this exceptional period. We shall see how Arab-Persian scholars not only preserved the legacy of antiquity, but also enriched it profoundly, thereby paving the way for the rise of astronomy and astrology in the medieval West and later during the Renaissance.

Episode 10: A legacy that permanently transformed the history of astrology

As we bring this season devoted to Arab-Persian civilisation to a close, one idea stands out clearly. The scholars of the 9th to 13th centuries were not merely custodians of ancient knowledge. They were its heirs, but also its developers. They studied Greek, Persian and Indian texts, translated them, compared them, corrected them where observations required it, and enriched them with their own research. This collective endeavour constitutes one of the greatest intellectual adventures in history.

Astronomy then underwent remarkable development. Observations became more precise, instruments were perfected, mathematical methods advanced, and astronomical tables reached a level of accuracy that would remain unrivalled for a long time. These advances directly benefited all those seeking to accurately represent the configuration of the heavens.

Astrology, too, benefited from this momentum. The great treatises were studied with a new rigour, interpretative techniques were explored in greater depth, calculation methods were refined, and several tools inherited from antiquity underwent considerable development. The

Arabic Parts, solar revolutions, studies of major conjunctions and numerous other techniques bear witness to this remarkable intellectual creativity.

This period also reveals a distinctive approach to advancing knowledge. Arab-Persian scholars did not regard ancient texts as untouchable ‘ ’. They tested them against observations, debated them, sometimes proposed corrections, and did not hesitate to compare different traditions when they addressed the same issue. This critical attitude contributed significantly to the scientific dynamism of their era.

Interdisciplinary exchange was another key feature. Mathematics informed astronomy, astronomy shed light on astrology, and philosophy questioned the foundations of knowledge, whilst medicine, geography and optics also advanced thanks to this ongoing dialogue. This flow of ideas fostered an understanding of the world in which different fields of knowledge enriched one another.

The influence of this period extended far beyond the borders of the Abbasid Caliphate. From the 12th century onwards, translations produced in Spain and Sicily enabled European universities to rediscover a considerably enriched intellectual heritage. Scholars in Paris, Bologna, Oxford and Montpellier thus inherited a tradition that had already been transformed by several centuries of Arab-Persian scholarship. The medieval West did not, therefore, receive Greek antiquity directly; it discovered it largely through the eyes of Arab-Persian scholars.

Historians of science now emphasise this point. For a long time, this period was sometimes described as merely a transitional phase between two great civilisations.

Contemporary research shows, on the contrary, that it was a period of exceptional innovation. The advances made in mathematics, astronomy, medicine and many other fields bear witness to genuine scientific creativity.

For the history of astrology, this conclusion is essential. Without the Arab-Persian astronomers and astrologers, much of ancient knowledge would probably have been lost or remained fragmentary. Moreover, several methods that would go on to become classical in Europe would doubtless never have reached the level of development we recognise today. This period therefore represents far more than a mere transitional phase: it constitutes a major chapter in the evolution of astrological thought.

Mindfulness astrology, too, forms part of this long historical continuity. It fully recognises the immense contribution of Arab-Persian scholars to the development of astrological language. But it also marks a new stage in this history by clearly distinguishing the symbolic tools developed over the centuries from the causal interpretation often associated with them. The signs, houses, aspects, transits and other techniques remain elements of a richly symbolic language, whilst their understanding is now framed within a perspective based on synchronicity, the psyche and the recognition of consciousness as a fundamental reality.

Finally, this history serves as a reminder of a more general truth. Civilisations do not flourish by isolating themselves, but by exchanging knowledge. Manuscripts travel, ideas cross borders, languages respond to one another, and discoveries enrich one another. The Golden Age in the Arab-Persian world brilliantly illustrates this fruitful circulation of knowledge, in which each generation

receives a legacy before transforming it and passing it on in turn.

Our journey now continues towards the medieval West. In the next series, we shall discover how the universities, translation schools, physicians, philosophers and astrologers of Europe would make this immense legacy from the Arab-Persian world their own. A new chapter begins, in which the knowledge passed down over centuries will give rise to medieval astrology, whose influence will be felt right through to the Renaissance and far beyond.

Season 9: Astrology in the Medieval West

Episode 1 Toledo: the city where the West rediscovered the heavens

When we think of the Western Middle Ages, we often imagine a time when ancient knowledge had been forgotten before suddenly reappearing during the Renaissance. The history is far more nuanced. Between these two periods lies a crucial, yet often overlooked, phase that unfolded in a city in Spain: Toledo. It was there that a considerable portion of the astronomical and astrological knowledge of the Arab-Persian world was translated into Latin, granting Europe unprecedented access to several centuries of research.

After its reconquest by King Alfonso VI of León in 1085, Toledo retained a remarkable cultural diversity. Christians, Muslims and Jews continued to live, work and exchange knowledge there. The city's libraries housed numerous manuscripts in Arabic, themselves the legacy of Greek, Persian and Indian traditions. This exceptional situation made Toledo an intellectual crossroads unrivalled in 12th-century Europe.

Very quickly, scholars from across the continent flocked to the city. Their aim was simple: to gain access to these works, unknown elsewhere in Europe. Many discovered for the first time the great treatises on astronomy, philosophy, medicine, mathematics and astrology preserved in the local libraries. What they found far exceeded their expectations.

The Toledo School of Translators, although not a single institution in the modern sense of the term, refers to this

vast translation movement that developed between the 12th and 13th centuries. The work was often carried out in teams. A scholar proficient in Arabic would explain the text, another would rephrase it in a Romance language, and then a Latin scholar would translate it into the academic language of the medieval West. This painstaking work required great rigour and close collaboration between specialists from very diverse backgrounds.

Among the most famous translators was Gerard of Cremona. Drawn to Toledo by a desire to consult Ptolemy's Almagest, he went on to translate more than seventy works covering an extremely wide range of subjects. Thanks to him, a vital part of the astronomical and astrological knowledge of the Arab-Persian world became accessible to European readers.

The works of Abu Ma'shar, Al-Kindi, Al-Biruni and numerous other authors now circulated in cathedral schools and subsequently in the emerging universities. Western astrologers discovered techniques of which they had little or no prior knowledge. Calculations became more precise, methods of interpretation diversified, and intellectual debates took on a new dimension.

This transmission also transformed European astronomy. The new astronomical tables made it possible to determine planetary positions with far greater precision. Instruments perfected in the Arab-Persian world were gradually adopted. Mathematical methods also spread, facilitating calculations that would have been extremely laborious just a few generations earlier.

Toledo thus became much more than a mere centre of translation. The city was a true meeting place for several intellectual traditions. Greek, Arabic, Jewish and Latin

legacies intersected, clashed and mutually enriched one another there. This constant exchange of ideas fostered a scientific revival that would leave a profound mark on the medieval West.

The history of Toledo reminds us that knowledge never travels alone. It is carried by men and women capable of learning other languages, understanding other cultures and accepting that truth can come from different horizons. Translators play a role here comparable to that of the great explorers: they open up pathways between worlds that were still largely unaware of one another.

For astrology, this period marked a decisive turning point. European practitioners now had access to an intellectual heritage of exceptional richness. They were not starting from scratch; they inherited nearly two millennia of Arab-Persian research. This accumulation of knowledge would soon lead to the emergence of leading figures in medieval astrology.

Mindfulness astrology finds a valuable lesson in this story. It reminds us that no tradition arises in isolation. All genuine research is rooted in a history of dialogue, translation, questioning and successive discoveries. Understanding this continuity enables us to engage with astrological tools in greater depth, distinguishing their historical origins from the contemporary interpretations we might offer.

In the next episode, we shall discover how the young European universities embraced this legacy. Astrology found an unexpected place there alongside medicine, philosophy and astronomy, revealing a conception of knowledge very different from the one we know today.

Episode 2: When universities taught astrology

From the 12th century onwards, Europe underwent a profound intellectual transformation. The great cathedral schools gradually gave way to the first universities, new institutions dedicated to teaching and research. Paris, Bologna, Oxford, Montpellier and Padua became centres to which students flocked from across the continent. Knowledge recently translated from Arabic found particularly fertile ground there.

The way these universities operated differed greatly from that of modern institutions. The disciplines were not yet so clearly separated. Philosophy, theology, medicine, mathematics, astronomy and astrology were closely intertwined. A student training to become a doctor would also receive a solid grounding in astronomy, as knowledge of celestial movements was then considered essential to several fields of learning.

Astrology occupies a very special place in this context. It is not taught as an independent discipline, but as an extension of astronomy. Students first learnt to calculate the positions of the planets, to use astronomical tables, to operate the astrolabe and to draw up a celestial chart. Interpretation came afterwards. This progression serves as a reminder of how, at that time, the precision of calculations was a prerequisite for any astrological analysis.

Medieval medicine was closely linked to this field of study. Many physicians consulted the positions of the Sun, the Moon and the planets when making their diagnoses or choosing the timing of certain procedures. This practice was based on the medical concepts of the time, founded in

particular on the theory of humours inherited from antiquity. It must be understood within its historical context and not in the light of current medical knowledge. University libraries gradually filled with major works translated in Toledo and other centres of learning. The treatises of Ptolemy, Abu Ma'shar, Al-Kindi and other authors became standard references for several generations of students. Lecturers would comment on them, discuss them and sometimes compare them with observations made in European observatories.

There was no shortage of debate. Some professors placed great trust in astrological methods, whilst others emphasised their limitations. Discussions centred on human free will, moral responsibility, the scope of interpretations, and the relationship between celestial phenomena and earthly events. These exchanges demonstrate that university teaching was by no means uniform. Controversies were an integral part of intellectual education.

The rise of universities also encouraged the spread of scientific instruments. Students learnt to use the astrolabe, quadrants and other devices for accurately measuring the sky. This practical training strengthened the links between astronomical observation and astrological calculations, two fields that remain closely associated to this day.

The emergence of universities also helped to professionalise certain activities. The most renowned astrologers were no longer merely isolated practitioners; many possessed a solid university education. They were proficient in mathematics, celestial geometry and methods of calculation, which earned them significant recognition in scholarly circles.

However, we must avoid a common misconception. Not all universities accord the same prominence to astrology, and this prominence has evolved over the centuries. Political, religious and intellectual contexts have greatly influenced teaching programmes. Certain periods have favoured its development, whilst others have seen the emergence of greater reservations or criticism.

This history serves as a reminder that the boundaries between disciplines shift over time. What we now regard as distinct fields once formed part of a single quest to understand the world. Medieval universities bear witness to this unified vision of knowledge, in which the observation of the heavens, philosophical reflection and the study of nature formed a coherent whole.

For mindfulness astrology, this period is of particular interest. It shows that the quality of an interpretation always depends on the rigour with which the tools are used. Medieval masters already emphasised the need to master the calculations before offering an interpretation of the chart. This requirement remains as relevant as ever. What has changed today is not the concern for astronomical precision, but the understanding of the meaning of the birth chart, which is now approached as a symbolic language appearing in synchronicity with the psyche rather than as the expression of a celestial influence.

In the next episode, we shall meet one of the most famous figures of this period: Guido Bonatti. His works would exert a considerable influence on medieval astrology and remain standard references for several hundred years.

Episode 3 Guido Bonatti: the most famous astrologer of the medieval West

By the 13th century, astrology was firmly established in European scholarly circles. Translations from Toledo were widely circulated, universities disseminated astronomical knowledge, and princely courts readily surrounded themselves with advisers capable of drawing up astrological charts. It was against this backdrop that one of the most famous figures in the entire history of Western astrology emerged: Guido Bonatti.

Born probably around 1210 in Italy, Guido Bonatti practised as an astrologer for several influential families of his time. Historical sources are sometimes incomplete, but they all bear witness to his great reputation. Princes, military leaders and political figures sought his expertise to inform certain important decisions. At that time, it was not unusual for a sovereign to consult an astrologer before a military campaign, diplomatic negotiations or the founding of a city.

Bonatti's fame rests above all on his immense treatise, the **Liber Astronomiae**. Despite its title, this work is essentially devoted to astrology. It methodically brings together the knowledge inherited from Greek, Arabic and Latin traditions. More than a mere manual, it constitutes a veritable encyclopaedia of medieval astrology.

One of Bonatti's great strengths is his organisational skills. He presents the various techniques with remarkable clarity, explains the rules of calculation, compares several methods and discusses the views of his predecessors. His work demonstrates the extent to which medieval astrology

had become a structured discipline, with a precise vocabulary and a sophisticated methodology.

Bonatti places great emphasis on horary astrology, which was undergoing significant development at the time. According to this approach, the chart drawn up at the moment a question is asked can provide insights into the situation in question. He also elaborates on the techniques of natal astrology, solar returns, elections and world astrology. His treatise bears witness to the breadth of subjects addressed by medieval astrologers. Far from limiting themselves to the natal chart, they sought to apply their symbolic language to a wide variety of human situations.

What is also striking when reading his work is the respect he shows towards his predecessors. Bonatti ly quotes Greek and Arabic authors, discusses their interpretations and explicitly acknowledges his debt to them. His work perfectly illustrates the intellectual continuity linking Mesopotamia, Greece, the Arab-Persian world and the medieval West.

His influence extended far beyond his own century. For several hundred years, the **Liber Astronomiae** remained one of the most frequently consulted works by European astrologers. It was copied into numerous manuscripts, studied in scholarly circles and frequently cited by Renaissance authors. Few astrological treatises enjoyed such enduring popularity.

It is, however, important to place Bonatti within his historical context. The methods he presents are based on the astronomical, philosophical and medical concepts of his time. They bear witness to the remarkable level of medieval knowledge, but they also reflect the limitations

inherent in thirteenth-century understanding. Understanding them today therefore requires both a historical perspective and a technical reading.

For mindfulness astrology, Guido Bonatti represents a vital link in the transmission of astrological language. The tools he describes — houses, aspects, transits, revolutions, horary and elective techniques — form part of the symbolic richness gradually developed over the centuries. However, their interpretation can now be profoundly renewed. The value of these techniques no longer lies in the search for a destiny determined by the stars, but in their ability to shed light, through synchronicity, on certain movements of the psyche and certain dimensions of conscious experience.

Bonatti's story also shows that a great work often arises from the ability to bring together scattered bodies of knowledge. His genius lay not only in creating new methods, but in coherently organising several centuries of research drawn from different cultures. This synthesis explains why his name remains associated with the heyday of medieval European astrology.

In the next episode, we shall leave the libraries and princely courts behind to explore a more practical aspect of this history: the role of astrologer-physicians. We shall see how, for several centuries, medicine and astrology were closely intertwined within universities and in the day-to-day practice of healthcare.

Episode 4 When doctors also observed the heavens

If a 21st-century doctor were to walk into a 13th-century medical school, they would no doubt be surprised by the subjects taught. Alongside anatomy inherited from the Ancients, medicinal botany and the theory of humours, they would discover courses in astronomy and astrology. This combination may seem surprising today, but at the time it formed part of a coherent conception of knowledge, in which the study of the heavens was an integral part of a doctor's training.

This tradition has its roots in Greek antiquity, and later in the developments of Arab-Persian civilisation. The great medical treatises translated into Latin conveyed a view of health based on the balance of the four humours: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. Medieval physicians believed that natural rhythms played an important role in the functioning of the body. Celestial movements were thus integrated into this general conception of nature.

European universities largely adopted this legacy. At renowned institutions such as those in Montpellier, Bologna and Padua, trainee doctors learnt to use astronomical tables, to recognise the main celestial configurations and to draw up certain charts. The aim of this training was not to replace clinical observation, but to supplement the knowledge considered useful for medical practice at the time.

One of the best-known symbols of this tradition is the zodiacal man. This representation associates the various parts of the human body with the twelve signs of the zodiac. This figure appears in numerous medieval medical

manuscripts. It served primarily as a visual aid to help memorise the correspondences accepted by physicians of that period.

Practitioners also paid particular attention to the phases of the Moon. Certain procedures, notably bloodletting, were sometimes scheduled taking into account the lunar calendar or the supposed position of the signs of the zodiac. These practices reflect the medical beliefs of the Middle Ages and must be viewed within their historical context. They do not correspond to the knowledge validated by contemporary medicine.

Medical astrology was not limited to treatments. It also played a part in establishing a prognosis. Some doctors would draw up a horoscope for the moment a patient was examined or for the onset of an illness, hoping to find clues as to its progression. Here too, these methods formed part of a holistic view of nature in which the heavens and the Earth were thought to belong to the same order.

This way of understanding health, however, began to evolve gradually. From the Renaissance onwards, advances in anatomy, experimentation and clinical observations led doctors to place increasing emphasis on the directly observable causes of diseases. Progress in physiology, microbiology and the medical sciences would profoundly alter the foundations of medicine. Medical astrology would then gradually lose its academic status.

This development illustrates a common phenomenon in the history of knowledge. Disciplines gradually became specialised. What had once formed part of a single body of knowledge was progressively divided among several autonomous sciences. Astronomy and astrology followed

distinct paths. Medicine developed its own experimental methods. Each field gradually acquired its autonomy.

For historians, however, this period remains fascinating. It shows how medieval societies sought to construct a coherent vision of the human being by linking the body, nature and the cosmos. Even though many of these conceptions were abandoned, they bear witness to a genuine desire to unify the knowledge available in their time.

For mindfulness astrology, this history points to a crucial distinction. The traditional associations between the signs, the planets and the human body form part of the history of symbolic representations developed by our ancestors. They should not be understood as causal relationships established by the medical sciences. The birth chart is not a tool for medical diagnosis. In this approach, it can offer a symbolic language through which to observe certain dimensions of psychological experience, but it never replaces the knowledge, examinations and treatments based on contemporary medicine.

Studying this period also reminds us just how much science evolves. Theories that once seemed the most robust can be profoundly transformed by new observations. This evolution does not diminish the historical significance of medieval concepts; it simply shows that all knowledge is part of a historical context.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that medieval doctors often looked up at the sky before turning their attention to their patients. This practice seems distant to us today, but it bears witness to an era when the human body, nature and the cosmos were conceived as different expressions of the same universal order.

In the next episode, we shall explore a subject that has profoundly shaped the entire history of medieval astrology: the sometimes complex relationship between the Church and astrology. Far from simplistic notions, we shall see that these relations were characterised by dialogue, distinctions and criticism, but also by a surprising coexistence spanning several centuries.

Episode 5 The Church and astrology: a more nuanced history than one might imagine

The image of a Middle Ages in which the Church indiscriminately rejected all forms of astrology is deeply ingrained in the collective imagination. Yet historians now reveal a far more complex reality. For several centuries, the relationship between Christian thought and astrology was characterised by debate, distinctions and, at times, compromise. Understanding this history requires us to move beyond caricatures and recognise the diversity of positions that coexisted within the medieval world.

Firstly, astronomy was not subject to blanket condemnation. On the contrary, it was widely taught in universities and ecclesiastical schools. Knowledge of celestial movements was essential for establishing the liturgical calendar, determining the date of Easter, and organising religious life. Astronomical observations were therefore regarded as legitimate and necessary knowledge.

The debates centred mainly on astrology. From the earliest centuries of Christianity, several thinkers questioned the philosophical implications of certain astrological interpretations. If the stars entirely determine human actions, what becomes of freedom? How, then, are we to

understand responsibility, moral merit, fault or judgement? These questions occupied a central place in theological reflections.

Among the most influential authors was Thomas Aquinas. His approach perfectly illustrates the nuance of medieval debates. He acknowledged that the heavenly bodies could exert an influence on the physical world, in accordance with the knowledge of his time, but he rejected the idea that this influence determined human will. For him, intelligence and freedom remain irreducible to the movements of the stars. This distinction enabled many scholars to reconcile certain astrological practices with Christian doctrine.

Other thinkers expressed more marked reservations. Saint Augustine, in particular, criticised astrology's claims to explain individual destinies. He emphasised that people born under very similar celestial configurations could lead profoundly different lives. His reflections were to have a lasting influence on Christian thought on this issue.

In practice, the situation remained highly varied. Several sovereigns, bishops and religious leaders consulted astrologers from time to time. Some monasteries kept works on astronomy and astrology in their libraries. Universities continued to teach the fundamentals of these disciplines. At the same time, several ecclesiastical authorities condemn customs deemed superstitious or practices claiming to predict the future with certainty or to deny human free will.

This coexistence of differing positions explains why it is impossible to speak of a single, un d attitude of the Church towards astrology. Decisions varied according to the period, the region, the authors and the issues under

discussion. The debates centred less on the observation of the heavens than on the philosophical interpretation drawn from them.

From the end of the Middle Ages onwards, these discussions continued against the backdrop of a rapidly changing intellectual landscape. Advances in astronomy, developments in natural philosophy and the dawn of modern science gradually led to a reformulation of the old questions. The place of astrology within the body of knowledge became an increasingly complex subject for reflection.

Historians today emphasise a key point: most medieval controversies centred on determinism. Theologians feared above all that a rigid interpretation of the heavens might lead to the denial of personal responsibility. It was therefore not the existence of the stars that was in question, but the way in which their relationship with human beings was understood.

This distinction resonates in a striking way with certain contemporary concerns. Mindfulness astrology, too, rejects any deterministic conception. However, it takes a different path from that of medieval thinkers. It does not seek to limit a supposed influence of the stars in order to preserve freedom; rather, it considers that this causal influence does not exist. The birth chart is understood as a symbolic language that emerges in synchronicity with the psyche. Consequently, the fundamental freedom of consciousness no longer conflicts with the existence of the birth chart, since the latter is no longer interpreted as a force acting upon the individual.

This development shows just how much a single question can elicit different answers depending on the era.

Medieval theologians sought to preserve freedom in the face of astrological determinism. Contemporary approaches based on synchronicity shift the debate by calling into question the very principle of astrological causality.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that the relationship between the Church and astrology was infinitely more nuanced than legend would have us believe. For several centuries, philosophical debates, theological reflections and astronomical research coexisted in a dialogue that was at times contentious, but often fruitful. This history reminds us that great intellectual traditions rarely progress through simple oppositions; they most often advance through increasingly subtle distinctions.

In the next episode, we shall open the libraries of monasteries, cathedrals and universities to explore medieval astrological manuscripts. Hand-copied, richly illustrated and sometimes annotated by several generations of readers, they now stand as an exceptional record of how knowledge circulated before the invention of the printing press.

Episode 6 Manuscripts: hand-copied books to convey the heavens

Today, it takes just a few seconds to download a book or browse a digital library containing thousands of titles. In the Middle Ages, the situation was quite different. Each book represented a considerable amount of work. Before the invention of the printing press, all manuscripts were copied by hand, line by line, sometimes over a period of

several months. Works on astronomy and astrology were among the most complex to reproduce, as they contained not only text but also tables, geometric diagrams, celestial maps and illustrations requiring a very high degree of precision.

The earliest European astrological manuscripts were often translations of Greek or Arabic works. Translators in Toledo and other centres of learning facilitated their dissemination, but each new copy still had to be reproduced by hand. Scribes worked in monasteries, cathedral schools, universities or specialised workshops that were gradually emerging in major cities.

The craft of a copyist demanded remarkable rigour. A single error in an astronomical table or a numerical value could render a calculation incorrect. Scribes therefore developed meticulous methods of verification. Despite these precautions, errors sometimes crept into the copies. Some would be corrected by subsequent readers, whilst others would be reproduced over several generations before being identified.

Medieval manuscripts are not merely faithful reproductions. Many bear the traces of those who studied them. The margins are filled with annotations, comments, corrections and sometimes even disagreements with the author. Each volume thus becomes a living record of a dialogue between several generations of readers. For historians, these notes are often just as valuable as the main text.

Illustrations also play an important role. Copists drew the signs of the zodiac, constellations, the geometric figures of the astrological chart, astronomical instruments, and even the zodiacal man used in certain medical treatises.

These images were not merely decorative; they aided the understanding of the texts and often served as teaching aids for students.

The production of a manuscript represents a considerable investment. Parchment is expensive, the pigments used for illumination are sometimes very rare, and the labour required is immense. Owning a library was therefore a privilege reserved for monasteries, universities, princes or a few wealthy scholars. Books were rarely circulated and were often copied on request.

Astrological works, however, travelled widely. A manuscript might be copied in Spain from an Arabic translation of a Greek text, then sent to Italy, where it would be copied again before reaching a French or English university. Each copy thus tells part of the story of how knowledge travelled across the medieval West.

Today, historians of science use these manuscripts to reconstruct the evolution of ideas. By comparing different copies of the same work, they can trace the emergence of new interpretations, the addition of chapters or corrections made over the centuries. The manuscripts thus become veritable archives of medieval thought.

The invention of printing in the 15th century would profoundly transform this situation. Texts could be reproduced much more quickly and with far greater accuracy. Astrological works would then enjoy unprecedented dissemination. But for over a thousand years, it was the scribes who ensured the survival and transmission of this intellectual heritage.

For mindfulness astrology, these manuscripts serve as a reminder of a fact that is often overlooked: the astrological tools we use today are the result of a long human history.

Behind every symbol, every house, every aspect and every interpretative technique lie generations of translators, copyists, teachers and scholars who devoted their lives to preserving and passing on this symbolic language. Learning about them invites a more humble and mindful approach to this heritage.

This history also shows that the transmission of knowledge depends as much on those who create it as on those who preserve it. The great authors would have left no trace were it not for the thousands of anonymous copyists who reproduced their works with extraordinary patience. Their contribution, though often forgotten, is nonetheless indispensable to the entire history of science and culture.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that medieval manuscripts are far more than just old books. They are tangible witnesses to several centuries of curiosity, study and dialogue between civilisations. Every hand-copied page recounts an intellectual adventure in which knowledge advanced at the pace of the scribe's patient hand.

In the next episode, we shall meet an unconventional figure from the late Middle Ages: Pierre d'Ailly. His life story illustrates the profound intellectual shifts that already heralded the transition from medieval astrology to the early Renaissance.

Episode 7 Pierre d'Ailly: a cardinal straddling theology, astronomy and astrology

At the end of the 14th century, Europe was undergoing a period of profound upheaval. Wars, political crises,

epidemics and the Great Western Schism were undermining its institutions. Yet the universities carried on with their work, and the great libraries continued to pass on the knowledge inherited from antiquity and from Arab-Persian civilisation. It was against this backdrop that a remarkable figure emerged: Pierre d'Ailly. A theologian, cardinal, philosopher, diplomat and man of science, he embodied the intellectual richness of the late Middle Ages. Born in 1351 in Compiègne, Pierre d'Ailly studied at the University of Paris, one of the most prestigious centres of learning of his time. There he acquired a solid grounding in theology, philosophy and logic, as well as in astronomy. Like many medieval scholars, he regarded these disciplines as part of a single endeavour aimed at better understanding the order of the world.

His career was remarkable. A professor and later chancellor of the University of Paris, he went on to become a bishop, a cardinal and an adviser to several popes. His influence extended far beyond the religious sphere. He played an active role in the intellectual debates of his time and was instrumental in attempts to end the Great Schism which was then dividing the Western Church.

Alongside his ecclesiastical responsibilities, Pierre d'Ailly wrote several works on cosmography, astronomy and astrology. He was particularly interested in major planetary conjunctions, historical cycles and the relationship between celestial phenomena and societal changes. Like many authors of his time, he sought to understand the major currents of history rather than to predict the details of each individual's destiny.

His work demonstrates great intellectual caution. Pierre d'Ailly carefully distinguished between astronomical observation, astrological hypotheses and theological convictions. This desire to maintain a balance between various fields of knowledge reflects the concerns of scholars in the late Middle Ages, who were keen to preserve both rigorous reasoning and the foundations of their faith.

He is also known for his interest in geography. His work **Imago Mundi** brings together the geographical knowledge of his time. Several historians believe that this book was consulted by Christopher Columbus before his first voyage westwards. Although the exact extent of this influence remains a matter of debate, this fact illustrates the considerable influence of Pierre d'Ailly's writings far beyond purely theological circles.

His career demonstrates just how permeable the boundaries between disciplines remained at the end of the Middle Ages. A single scholar could write on philosophy, theology, geography, astronomy and astrology without perceiving any contradiction between these fields. This holistic view of knowledge still largely characterised European universities before the gradual specialisation of the following centuries.

Pierre d'Ailly's reflections already foreshadow certain developments of the Renaissance. His interest in ancient texts, his commitment to comparing different sources and his curiosity about geographical discoveries bear witness to an intellectual world undergoing profound transformation. The certainties inherited from the Middle Ages were gradually beginning to be re-examined in the light of new observations and new horizons.

In the history of astrology, Pierre d'Ailly represents one of the last great figures of the medieval tradition. He built upon the works of Ptolemy, Abu Ma'shar, Al-Biruni and Guido Bonatti, whilst paving the way for the questions that would accompany the Renaissance. His work thus marks a turning point between two major periods in the history of ideas.

For mindfulness astrology, his journey serves as a reminder that a living tradition never ceases to question its own foundations. Pierre d'Ailly was already seeking to articulate various forms of knowledge without conflating them. Even today, this requirement remains essential. The symbolic interpretation of the birth chart benefits from being situated within an ongoing dialogue with history, philosophy and contemporary knowledge, whilst clearly distinguishing the language of synchronicity from ancient deterministic conceptions.

The study of Pierre d'Ailly also reminds us that periods of transition are often the most fruitful. When several worldviews coexist, questions multiply, certainties are reassessed and new perspectives emerge. The end of the Middle Ages constitutes precisely one of those moments when the past and the future engage in an intense dialogue.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that Pierre d'Ailly was far more than just a cardinal or an academic. He embodies an era in which Europe was beginning to look beyond its intellectual and geographical boundaries. His work already foreshadows the immense transformations that would soon accompany the Renaissance.

In the next episode, we shall see how medieval astrological techniques reached their highest level of sophistication

before being gradually challenged by astronomical discoveries and new scientific methods. We shall thus witness the final major developments in medieval astrology before the dawn of a new era.

Episode 8: The Heyday of Medieval Astrological Techniques

During the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries, Western astrology reached a remarkable level of technical development. Having assimilated the Mesopotamian, Greek and Arabic traditions, medieval astrologers now had at their disposal a particularly elaborate set of methods. Never before had so many techniques been brought together within a single tradition. This wealth of knowledge bears witness to several centuries of patient research, discussion and successive refinements.

The natal chart remains the starting point for any interpretation. Astrologers analyse with great care the signs of the zodiac, the houses, the aspects, planetary dignities, rulerships and the various relationships between the elements of the chart. Every detail is studied meticulously in order to construct an interpretation that is as coherent as possible.

Numerous complementary techniques are built upon this foundation. Solar returns enable the examination of the major symbolic trends of a year. Profections, a tradition dating back to antiquity, are used to highlight periods when certain sectors of the chart appear to take on greater significance. Primary directions and symbolic directions, meanwhile, seek to establish a correspondence between the passage of time and the structure of the natal chart.

Horary astrology also experienced considerable growth. The rules became increasingly precise and the number of treatises devoted to this discipline multiplied. Astrologers developed extremely detailed interpretative criteria, sometimes based on very subtle distinctions between different planetary configurations.

Electional astrology, too, continued to evolve. Practitioners sought to determine the most favourable times to undertake certain important actions. The calculations became ever more complex, drawing on several techniques simultaneously in order to achieve a configuration deemed as harmonious as possible according to the concepts of the time.

The study of the great conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn continued to occupy an important place in world astrology. The cycles of these two planets were used to reflect on the political, religious and social transformations that marked the major periods of history. This approach illustrates the constant interest of medieval astrologers in collective events as much as in individual destinies.

The quality of calculations also improved dramatically. New astronomical tables made it possible to determine planetary positions with far greater precision than in previous centuries. Refined instruments facilitated observations and gradually reduced certain errors that had affected earlier calculations. Astrologers thus had access to increasingly accurate representations of the sky.

This sophistication, however, led to an unexpected consequence. The more methods there were, the more difficult it became to apply them. Different authors did not always agree on the rules to be applied, the orbs to be used or the techniques to be favoured. Two astrologers might

sometimes arrive at different interpretations based on the same chart. This diversity attested to the vitality of the discipline, but it also revealed its growing complexity.

The great medieval treatises sought precisely to bring order to this profusion of methods. They proposed hierarchies, reiterated the fundamental principles and emphasised the need for thorough training before any interpretation could be made. Astrology thus emerged as a demanding discipline, requiring several years of study to master.

By the end of the Middle Ages, few new elements were still being added to this body of technical knowledge. The main structures of Western astrology were now firmly established. The signs, houses, aspects, temporal techniques, revolutions, elections and interrogations constituted a relatively stable system that would be widely adopted by Renaissance astrologers.

For mindfulness astrology, this legacy is of considerable historical value. It demonstrates the extent to which previous generations have developed the symbolic language of the birth chart. But it also encourages us to distinguish between the tools themselves and their interpretation. The techniques themselves can retain their full descriptive richness without it being necessary to adhere to the deterministic conceptions that often accompanied them. They then become means of observing the movements of the psyche as they synchronise with experience, rather than instruments intended to foretell a future that is already written.

This development brings to mind a key idea. A method can become increasingly precise without its meaning remaining unchanged. The history of science often shows

that tools outlive the theories that gave rise to them. Astrology, too, offers several examples of this distinction between the instruments of analysis and the philosophical frameworks within which they were developed.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that medieval astrology had by then reached its highest level of technical sophistication. The centuries that followed would inherit this immense methodological legacy. But they would also inherit a set of questions that would continue to grow in importance: how should these tools be interpreted? To what extent can they be said to have explanatory power? And above all, how can they be integrated with the new discoveries already looming on the horizon?

In the next episode, we shall witness the first signs of a profound change. Astronomical discoveries, new methods of observation and the intellectual transformations of the late Middle Ages will gradually pave the way for the Renaissance, a period in which astrology will have to learn to engage with a rapidly changing world view.

Episode 9 The End of the Middle Ages: When the World Began to Change

During the 15th century, Europe gradually entered a period of profound transformation. The major intellectual frameworks of the Middle Ages were still in place, but numerous changes were already heralding a new era. Towns were expanding, trade was intensifying, universities were continuing to flourish, and knowledge was circulating ever more rapidly. Astrology, like all

scholarly disciplines, was to be profoundly shaped by these developments.

One of the most significant events was undoubtedly the invention of movable-type printing by Johannes Gutenberg in the mid-15th century. Until then, every manuscript had to be copied by hand. From then on, a single work could be reproduced in numerous copies with a speed and accuracy previously unknown. This revolution brought about a lasting transformation in the dissemination of knowledge.

Treatises on astronomy and astrology were among the first scientific works to benefit from this innovation. Astronomical tables, ephemerides and major medieval texts became much more accessible. Errors introduced by successive copies gradually diminished, and scholars from different regions were finally able to work from almost identical versions of the same works.

At the same time, major geographical discoveries gradually altered people's understanding of the world. Sea voyages became more frequent, maps grew more accurate, and Europeans realised that the knowledge inherited from antiquity did not answer all their questions. This opening up to new horizons fuelled a spirit of exploration that also extended to the sciences.

Astronomers continued their observations using ever more sophisticated instruments. Planetary tables were regularly revised to account for discrepancies between ancient calculations and the movements actually observed. This demand for precision quietly paved the way for the great astronomical revolutions of the following centuries.

The intellectual climate was also changing. Humanists were rediscovering Greek texts in their original language

and were no longer content to rely solely on medieval translations. They sought to return to the sources, compare manuscripts and re-examine the ancient authors with a fresh perspective. This critical approach applied equally to philosophy, mathematics, astronomy and astrology.

Astrology still enjoyed immense prestige. Princes, physicians, universities and European courts continued to consult astrologers. Astrological calendars were widely distributed thanks to the printing press. The techniques developed during the Middle Ages remained in widespread use, and several leading astrologers began to publish works that would henceforth circulate throughout Europe.

Yet certain signs were already pointing to a profound change. Astronomical observations were becoming increasingly precise, sometimes revealing discrepancies with the old models. Philosophical debates on causality, human free will and methods of knowledge continued. Gradually, the idea took hold that theories inherited from the past could be debated, corrected and sometimes replaced.

This new attitude is perhaps the most significant transformation. For a long time, the authority of the great authors had occupied a central place in the transmission of knowledge. From now on, observation, the comparison of data and verification are taking on increasing importance. This development does not mark an abrupt break with the Middle Ages, but it paves the way for the development of modern science.

For mindfulness astrology, this period illustrates a dynamic that remains relevant today. The symbolic tools inherited from the past can continue to be used whilst

being reinterpreted in the light of new understandings. History shows that the traditions that prove mo ly fruitful are not those that reject all evolution, but those that are able to distinguish between methods, observations and the accompanying philosophical frameworks. This capacity for discernment remains essential today.

The end of the Middle Ages thus appears less as a rupture than as a slow transition. Ancient knowledge did not disappear; it gradually encountered new ways of observing, reasoning and transmitting knowledge. It was precisely from this encounter that the Renaissance emerged.

As we bring this episode to a close, we realise that the fifteenth century resembles a bridge between two worldviews. On the one hand, the great intellectual constructs of the Middle Ages endure; on the other, the first signs of a scientific and cultural revolution are already emerging, one that would permanently transform the history of Europe. Astrology, too, would soon have to find its place within this new world.

In the next and final episode of this series, we shall take stock of medieval astrology. We shall see how nearly five centuries of research, teaching and knowledge transfer paved the way for the dawn of the Renaissance, leaving a legacy that would have a lasting influence on Western astrology right up to the present day.

Episode 10 The Middle Ages: a legacy that paved the way for the Renaissance

As this ninth season draws to a close, one thing is clear. Far from being merely an interlude between Antiquity and

the Renaissance, the Middle Ages represent a crucial period in the history of Western astrology. For nearly five centuries, European scholars studied, organised, expanded upon and passed on an intellectual legacy of exceptional richness. Without their work, much of this astrological knowledge would never have reached subsequent generations.

It all began with the encounter with knowledge from the Arab-Persian world. Translators in Toledo, Sicily and other intellectual centres made Greek works accessible in Latin, works that had been enriched by several centuries of research in the great centres of learning in Baghdad, Damascus, Basra and Isfahan. This transmission was not merely a reproduction of the past. It opened up a vast intellectual endeavour in which European universities discovered new methods, more precise instruments and philosophical reflections of remarkable depth.

Universities thus played a decisive role. They provided a stable framework for the teaching of astronomy and astrology, facilitated the circulation of manuscripts and trained several generations of scholars. The debates that took place there demonstrated that knowledge advances less through unanimity than through the clash of ideas. Discussions on human free will, causality, methods of interpretation and the philosophical foundations of astrology bear witness to a genuine intellectual vitality.

The Middle Ages were also the period when the major astrological techniques reached their full maturity. Natal charts, solar returns, profections, directions, elections, horary enquiries and world astrology now formed a particularly sophisticated methodological framework. This legacy was largely taken up by Renaissance

astrologers, and subsequently by those of the following centuries.

This period also saw the emergence of several major figures, including Guido Bonatti and Pierre d'Ailly, who each, in their own way, embodied the evolution of European astrological thought. Their works bear witness to a constant endeavour to synthesise the knowledge inherited from the Greek, Arabic and Latin traditions, whilst adapting it to the concerns of their own time.

The history of the Middle Ages also reveals the often overlooked importance of translators, copyists, teachers and students. Great discoveries do not depend solely on famous authors. They also rely on thousands of men and women who copy manuscripts, annotate texts, pass on knowledge and educate subsequent generations. Without this vast chain of transmission, even the greatest works would have left no legacy.

By the end of the 15th century, however, a new horizon emerged. The printing press accelerated the dissemination of books. Major geographical discoveries considerably broadened our understanding of the world. Astronomical observations became more precise. The first humanists turned directly to ancient texts. Gradually, the conditions were in place for a new way of thinking about the heavens to emerge.

This transition to the Renaissance did not mean that medieval astrology suddenly disappeared. On the contrary, the great astrologers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries would continue to use most of the methods developed during the Middle Ages. What would gradually change was the way the cosmos was viewed. Astronomical discoveries would challenge several models inherited

from antiquity, ushering in a period of profound intellectual transformation.

For mindfulness astrology, the Middle Ages represent a fundamental stage in the development of astrological language. The technical tools developed during this period form an essential part of the legacy passed down to us. However, their significance can now be reinterpreted within a profoundly different philosophical framework. The methods remain, but interpretation is gradually moving away from deterministic conceptions towards an understanding based on the synchronicity between the heavens and the psyche, as well as on the recognition of consciousness as a fundamental reality. This evolution shows that a tradition can retain its symbols whilst profoundly renewing their meaning.

Finally, the history of medieval astrology teaches us a more general lesson. Great intellectual civilisations do not thrive on constant ruptures, but on creative continuities. Each era receives a legacy, transforms it in the light of its own questions, and then passes it on to those who follow. The Middle Ages illustrate this dynamic admirably. It neither invented astrology nor merely preserved ancient knowledge: it organised, deepened and prepared it for the centuries to come.

As we bring this ninth series to a close, we realise just how much the journey that began with the earliest Mesopotamian observations has been enriched over the course of the centuries. Knowledge has crossed languages, religions, empires and borders. It has been debated, corrected, supplemented and, at times, profoundly transformed. This is the story of an unbroken quest to

understand the heavens and humanity's place in the Universe.

Our journey now takes us to a period when the world is set to change more rapidly than ever before. The Renaissance ushers in an era of unprecedented discoveries, inventions and intellectual upheavals. Astronomers will soon challenge the very structure of the cosmos, whilst astrologers will seek to adapt their tradition to this new vision of the heavens. A new adventure begins, in which ancient certainties will encounter the boldness of modern thought.

Season 10: Astrology in the Renaissance

Episode 1 The Printing Press: The Revolution That Transformed Knowledge

Around the mid-15th century, an invention was to profoundly alter the history of knowledge. For centuries, books had been copied by hand by patient and meticulous scribes. Each manuscript represented a lengthy, costly and sometimes unique labour of love. This slowness naturally limited the spread of ideas. The advent of printing with movable type completely transformed the situation. For the first time, a single work could be reproduced in hundreds of copies with a speed and accuracy previously unimaginable.

This innovation is generally attributed to Johannes Gutenberg, who, around 1450, developed a process combining movable metal type, a screw press and inks suitable for printing. Whilst other forms of printing had already existed in Asia for several centuries, the technique developed in Europe brought about a lasting transformation in the circulation of books across the continent.

The consequences were immense. Works that had previously taken several months to copy could now be reproduced in a matter of days. Errors in transmission were considerably reduced, texts became more consistent, and readers in different regions were finally able to work from identical editions. Knowledge gradually ceased to be the privilege of a few libraries and began to circulate on a scale previously unknown.

Astronomy very quickly benefited from this revolution. Astronomical tables, star charts and ephemerides could be printed with remarkable precision. Astronomers now had access to the same data, which facilitated comparisons of observations and accelerated progress in calculations. Corrections made by one scholar could be known a few months later in another part of the West.

Astrology, too, benefited from this dissemination. The great medieval treatises, long confined to a few manuscripts, were now published in multiple editions. The works of Guido Bonatti, Abu Ma'shar and many other authors became much more accessible. Astrological calendars enjoyed considerable popularity with the public, whilst almanacs widely disseminated basic astronomical knowledge.

This abundance of books also fostered exchanges between scholars. Astronomers could now discuss the same texts, correct certain errors or propose new interpretations based on a shared body of literature. Research gradually became a Europe-wide dialogue. Ideas now travelled almost as fast as merchants.

Printing also transformed education. Students were no longer dependent solely on notes taken during lectures or on the few manuscripts available in libraries. They could acquire their own copies of certain works, annotate them, compare them and pursue their research in a more independent manner. This development contributed to the rise of Renaissance universities.

Another consequence gradually became apparent. As books became easier to distribute, debates multiplied. New theories spread rapidly, but so did criticism. Scholars now had an effective means of responding to their opponents.

This acceleration of intellectual exchange fuelled the great scientific controversies of the 16th and 17th centuries.
Printing also helped to preserve knowledge. Whereas a single manuscript might be lost in a fire or during a war, a printed book now existed in numerous copies scattered across different towns and cities. The most important works thus had a far greater chance of surviving the passage of time.
For astrology, this new situation led to an unprecedented dissemination of interpretative methods. Techniques previously taught in a handful of universities or passed on amongst specialists became accessible to a much wider audience. This democratisation fostered diversity in practice, but it also led to a proliferation of interpretations and schools of thought.
For mindfulness astrology, the invention of the printing press serves as a reminder of how much intellectual tools depend on the means of transmission. An idea can only bring about lasting change to a tradition if it can be shared, discussed and explored in depth. Printed works enabled the dissemination of the major astrological concepts of the Renaissance. In the same way, the contemporary means of communication now offer new possibilities for conveying a symbolic interpretation of the birth chart based on synchronicity and consciousness, whilst fostering an international dialogue between researchers and practitioners.
Looking back at this period from a historical perspective, we realise that the printing press did not merely increase the number of books. It profoundly changed the way knowledge is constructed. Knowledge became more accessible, debates more open and discoveries made more

rapidly. A new intellectual dynamic took hold, paving the way for the great scientific revolutions of the Renaissance. As we bring this episode to a close, we realise that the invention of the printing press was one of the true birth moments of the modern world. Books ceased to be rare objects and became instruments for the dissemination of ideas. Thanks to them, astronomy and astrology entered a period of extraordinary productivity, in which traditions inherited from the Middle Ages would meet the discoveries that would soon transform our view of the Universe.

In the next episode, we shall see how the new ephemerides and advances in astronomical calculations would provide astronomers and astrologers with a representation of the sky of unprecedented precision. This development would directly pave the way for the great discoveries that would define the entire Renaissance.

Episode 2 The new ephemerides: when the heavens became more precise than ever

Ever since the earliest observers in Mesopotamia, astronomers have constantly sought to predict the movements of the stars with ever-greater accuracy. In every era, new observations have made it possible to refine calculations and correct errors that had accumulated over the centuries. The Renaissance marked a decisive turning point in this long history. Thanks to advances in mathematics, more frequent observations and the printing press, the ephemeris reached an unprecedented level of precision.

Ephemerides are tables showing, day by day, the positions of the major celestial bodies. They enable astronomers to predict the movements of the Sun, the Moon and the planets, and also allow astrologers to draw up birth charts with much greater reliability. For a long time, these tables were based primarily on models developed by Ptolemy and subsequently refined in the Arab-Persian world. They had been of immense service, but the accumulated observations gradually revealed certain inaccuracies.

In the 15th century, several astronomers therefore set about revising these calculations. New observations were compared with the old tables in order to correct the discrepancies. This work required a remarkable mastery of mathematics, geometry and trigonometry. It also drew on the finest observational instruments available, the quality of which had improved considerably since the Middle Ages.

Among the most important publications were the *Ephemerides* by Johannes Müller, better known as Regiomontanus. Published at the end of the 15th century, they quickly became a standard reference throughout Europe. Their accuracy far exceeded that of previous tables, and they were used by astronomers, navigators and astrologers alike for several decades.

These new tables played a role extending far beyond astrology. Great explorers used them to improve their navigational calculations. Astronomers used them to compare their observations with theoretical predictions. Calendars became more accurate. The entire representation of the heavens gradually became more reliable.

This improvement in accuracy produced an unexpected effect. The more precise the observations became, the more discrepancies emerged between the actual movements of the planets and the old astronomical models. Small differences, once imperceptible, now became significant enough to raise new questions. Astronomers began to wonder whether certain foundational principles inherited from antiquity might not be worth re-examining.

Thus, technical progress was quietly paving the way for an intellectual revolution. The new ephemerides did not in themselves call into question the traditional view of the cosmos, but they provided the data that would soon enable other scholars to propose entirely new models. Major scientific transformations often begin with an improvement in measurements before leading to a transformation of theories.

Astrologers welcomed these advances with enthusiasm. More precise planetary positions meant more accurate birth charts. Errors arising from approximate calculations gradually diminished. This development further reinforced the importance attached to a mastery of astronomy as an indispensable foundation for any serious astrological practice.

The Renaissance thus saw the reinforcement of a principle that had already been in place for several centuries: astrology depends entirely on the quality of astronomical observations. Without reliable calculations, no interpretation can claim to be based on a correct representation of the heavens. This shared requirement continues to unite astronomers and astrologers, even as their objectives gradually begin to diverge.

For mindfulness astrology, this history serves as a reminder that the quality of a symbolic language depends first and foremost on the fidelity with which it represents the celestial configuration. Advances in ephemeris do not validate the influence of the stars; they simply provide an ever more accurate picture of the sky at the moment in question. The more precise this representation is, the more rigorous the symbolic framework on which the interpretation is based. Astronomical precision thus remains indispensable, even when the birth chart is understood from a perspective based on synchronicity rather than causality.

The new ephemerides also illustrate a more general lesson from the history of science. Major revolutions do not always begin with new ideas. They often arise from more precise observations that render old explanations less ly less satisfactory. Figures sometimes precede theories.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that a few columns of numbers printed in a book helped to transform our understanding of the heavens. The new ephemerides of the Renaissance were not merely tools for calculation; they quietly paved the way for the discoveries that would soon revolutionise astronomy and, with it, the entire history of astrology.

In the next episode, we shall meet one of the most famous figures of the Renaissance: Gerolamo Cardano, better known as Cardan. A multi-talented humanist, he embodied the spirit of curiosity that characterised this era, when the boundaries between disciplines began to blur in favour of an ever more ambitious quest for knowledge.

Episode 3: Cardan – the man of a thousand talents

Among the great intellectual figures of the Renaissance, few had a life story as remarkable as that of Gerolamo Cardano, better known in French as Cardan. Born in Pavia in 1501, he lived through an era of extraordinary intellectual expansion. Discoveries were multiplying, books were circulating thanks to the printing press, and scholars were seeking to push back the boundaries of the knowledge inherited from the Middle Ages. Cardan played a full part in this intellectual effervescence.

From a very early age, he displayed exceptional curiosity. He studied mathematics, medicine, philosophy and astronomy. Like many humanists of his time, he refused to confine himself to a single discipline. In his view, all forms of knowledge contributed to a better understanding of the world and of humankind. This holistic vision was a defining feature of the Renaissance.

His reputation as a physician quickly grew considerably. He treated prominent figures in several Italian cities and gained international renown. His clinical approach, his powers of observation and his penchant for experimentation earned him the admiration of many of his contemporaries. This medical career secured him recognition that extended far beyond the circle of astrologers.

At the same time, Cardano made major contributions to mathematics. His work **Ars Magna**, published in 1545, is one of the foundational texts of modern algebra. In particular, he presented methods for solving third- and fourth-degree equations, paving the way for new

mathematical developments. Historians of science now regard this book as one of the great works of the scientific Renaissance.

His name is also associated with several mechanical inventions. The gimbal, a system of joints enabling the transmission of motion between two inclined axes, still bears his name. This diversity of achievements perfectly illustrates the spirit of an era in which the boundaries between disciplines were still largely open.

Astrology, however, played an important role in his life. Cardan drew up numerous horoscopes and wrote several treatises devoted to this discipline. He was particularly interested in the interpretation of character, the stages of life and the significant events of one's existence. His approach reflects a constant desire to observe the correspondences between celestial configurations and human experiences.

One of Cardan's distinctive traits lay in his penchant for personal experience. He did not hesitate to analyse his own birth chart and to test his interpretations against the events of his own life. This approach, relatively rare for the time, reflected a desire to verify astrological hypotheses through concrete observation rather than relying solely on the authority of earlier authors.

His personality was as complex as it was brilliant. He enjoyed great successes, but also faced difficult trials. His life was marked by several family tragedies, accusations, periods of imprisonment and conflicts with some of his contemporaries. His autobiography, **De vita propria**, remains one of the most unique accounts of the Renaissance, blending scientific reflections, personal narratives and astrological observations.

Cardan belonged to a pivotal generation. He still inherited the traditional cosmological view, yet he lived at a time when scientific discoveries were beginning to challenge many long-held certainties. The first criticisms of the models inherited from Ptolemy were already emerging. The intellectual world was gradually entering a period of profound transformation.

His work perfectly reflects this transition. It remains faithful to several medieval traditions whilst demonstrating a much freer spirit of observation. Cardan does not merely repeat the ancient authorities ; he compares, experiments, discusses and seeks to understand for himself. This attitude already foreshadows the method that would gradually come to dominate modern science.

Cardan is of particular interest to mindfulness astrology. His desire to observe experience directly rather than rely solely on tradition is an approach that remains relevant today. However, the interpretation proposed today differs profoundly from his own. Whereas Cardan was still seeking explanatory links between celestial configurations and events, mindfulness astrology regards the birth chart as a symbolic language that manifests in synchrony with the movements of the psyche. Observation remains essential, but it is situated within a profoundly renewed philosophical framework.

Cardan’s story also shows that major periods of transformation are often embodied by figures who are difficult to categorise. A physician, mathematician, philosopher, inventor and astrologer, he rejected the artificial boundaries between disciplines. This intellectual freedom undoubtedly explains why his influence extends far beyond any single field to which he devoted himself.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that Cardan was far more than just a famous Renaissance astrologer. He embodies the humanist ideal of a scholar convinced that knowledge forms a whole and that each discipline sheds light on the others. His journey already foreshadows the immense scientific upheavals that would soon transform our understanding of the heavens.
In the next episode, we shall meet an equally famous but very different figure: Nostradamus. Spanning medicine, astrology and prophecies, his work would go on to shape the popular image of the astrologer for generations to come, right up to the present day.

Episode 4: Nostradamus – between history, astrology and legend

Few names are as famous as that of Nostradamus. More than four centuries after his death, his writings continue to inspire countless books, documentaries and debates. For many, he embodies the prophet capable of foretelling the great events of history. Yet behind this almost mythical image lies a very real man, deeply rooted in the scientific and intellectual context of the Renaissance.
Born in 1503 in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence as Michel de Nostredame, he received an education that led him towards medicine and pharmacy. From a very early age, he took an interest in medicinal plants, hygiene and methods of treatment. During the major plague epidemics that struck the south of France, he built a solid reputation through his dedication to caring for the sick. Whilst the medical knowledge of his time was a far cry from that of

today, his focus on observation and prevention earned him the esteem of many of his contemporaries.

Like many Renaissance scholars, Nostradamus was also interested in astronomy and astrology. Every year, he published almanacs containing astronomical observations, calendars and general predictions. These publications enjoyed immense popular success. Printed in large numbers, they circulated throughout France and far beyond, making their author one of the most widely read writers of his time.

It was, however, the **Prophéties**, published from 1555 onwards, that would secure his lasting fame. The work consists of hundreds of quatrains written in a deliberately enigmatic style, mixing French, Latin, Provençal and, at times, expressions borrowed from other languages. This complex style makes the texts particularly open to interpretation.

From the moment they were published, these quatrains aroused both fascination and controversy. Some readers believed they recognised events of their own time in them. Others felt they foretold the future. Over the centuries, each generation has re-read the same texts in the light of the events they are experiencing. Wars, revolutions, natural disasters and political changes have given rise to new interpretations. This flexibility largely explains the work's exceptional longevity.

Historians, however, urge great caution. There is no evidence to suggest that Nostradamus accurately predicted the events that some attribute to him today. Most of the proposed parallels were drawn after the events had taken place. The highly general wording, symbolic imagery and ambiguities of the text allow for multiple interpretations.

This phenomenon, well known to historians and psychologists, explains why the same quatrain can be associated with very different events depending on the era. It is also important to distinguish between Nostradamus's various activities. His work as an astrologer, his almanacs, his medical research and his **Prophecies** do not all follow exactly the same approach. The confusions that have arisen over time have often contributed to blurring our understanding of his work. The historical figure is far more nuanced than the legendary figure of the infallible prophet.

His immense fame nevertheless bears witness to a remarkable cultural phenomenon. No other astrologer has left such a mark on the Western collective imagination. His name has become synonymous with prophecy, far beyond the actual content of his writings. This exceptional fame explains why he continues to occupy a special place in the history of the Renaissance.

For mindfulness astrology, the case of Nostradamus is particularly instructive. It serves as a reminder of how essential it is to distinguish between symbol and prediction. The mindfulness approach does not regard the birth chart as a means of foretelling a future that is already written. It views it as a symbolic language that emerges in synchrony with the movements of the psyche. From this perspective, the value of astrology lies not in the search for prophecies, but in a clearer understanding of the present experience. The story of Nostradamus thus shows how a fascination with the future can sometimes overshadow the true richness of symbolic language.

This reflection also sheds light on our relationship with ancient texts. The more open-ended a work is, the more it

invites readers to project their own expectations onto it. The *Prophecies* are undoubtedly one of the most famous examples of this phenomenon. Their success is due not only to their author, but also to the way in which each era seeks to recognise its own anxieties and hopes within them.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that Nostradamus was at once a physician, an author, an astrologer and a literary figure. His fate illustrates the power of the myths that can arise around a historical figure. Behind the legend of the prophet lies a Renaissance man, curious about all forms of knowledge and deeply marked by the upheavals of his century.

In the next episode, we shall meet a figure who would leave his mark on history in a very different way: Tycho Brahe. An observer of exceptional precision, he devoted his life to measuring the heavens with a degree of accuracy never before achieved, thereby paving the way for the discoveries that would forever transform our understanding of the Universe.

Episode 5: Tycho Brahe – the man who measured the heavens like no one before him

At the end of the 16th century, Europe was undergoing a period of profound intellectual transformation. Traditional astronomical models were increasingly being questioned, observational instruments were becoming more precise, and scholars began to place greater importance on measurements than on the authority of ancient texts. At the heart of this development was an exceptional figure: Tycho Brahe. His work marked a decisive turning point in

the history of astronomy and, indirectly, in that of astrology.

Born in 1546 into a noble family in Denmark, Tycho Brahe received a particularly thorough humanist education. From a very young age, he developed a passion for observing the heavens. A solar eclipse he witnessed during his adolescence convinced him to devote his life to astronomy. He realised then that celestial movements could be studied with far greater precision than had been possible for previous generations.

The King of Denmark soon provided him with the means to realise this ambition. On the island of Hven, Tycho had the Uraniborg observatory built, followed by a second, underground observatory called Stjerneborg. These facilities were among the most remarkable scientific centres of their time. Long before the invention of the telescope, they were equipped with gigantic instruments capable of measuring the positions of the celestial bodies with unrivalled precision.

For more than twenty years, Tycho Brahe tirelessly observed the sky. Night after night, he recorded the positions of the stars and planets, compared his measurements, checked his calculations and corrected any errors he discovered. This painstaking accumulation of data constituted one of the largest collections of astronomical observations ever compiled before the advent of the telescope.

His discoveries gradually called into question several ideas inherited from antiquity. In 1572, he observed the appearance of a new star in the constellation Cassiopeia. Contrary to what Aristotelian tradition claimed, the heavens were therefore not immutable. A few years later,

his study of a great comet showed that these objects traversed celestial regions thought to consist of solid spheres. Here again, the old conceptions began to falter.

Tycho Brahe himself proposed an original cosmological model. Refusing to fully adopt Copernicus's heliocentric system, yet recognising the difficulties of Ptolemy's traditional model, he devised an intermediate system. The Earth remains stationary at the centre of the Universe; the Sun revolves around it, whilst the other planets revolve around the Sun. This model was debated for several decades before being gradually abandoned in favour of heliocentrism.

However, Tycho Brahe's historical significance does not lie primarily in this theory. His true legacy lies in the exceptional quality of his observations. The thousands of measurements he left behind at his death would become the raw material for the work of his former assistant, Johannes Kepler. Without these extraordinarily precise data, Kepler would probably never have been able to discover the laws of planetary motion.

Tycho Brahe also practised astrology, as did most astronomers of his time. He drew up horoscopes, made predictions and regarded this discipline as a natural extension of his astronomical research. This association serves as a reminder that, during the Renaissance, the separation between astronomy and astrology had not yet been fully established. The two fields drew on the same observations of the sky, even though their objectives were gradually beginning to diverge.

His career perfectly illustrates a fundamental shift in scientific thought. Observation gradually took precedence over authority. Ancient texts continued to be studied with

respect, but they could now be corrected when measurements showed that they no longer corresponded to observed reality. This approach marked the beginning of a new way of constructing knowledge.

For mindfulness astrology, Tycho Brahe serves as a reminder of just how indispensable astronomical precision remains. Whatever philosophical interpretation is adopted, the birth chart is based first and foremost on an exact representation of the celestial configuration. The demand for rigour in observation is therefore a precious legacy. On the other hand, the meaning attributed to this configuration belongs to another level. Mindfulness astrology does not see these positions as the cause of human events, but as the vehicle for a symbolic language that emerges in synchrony with the movements of the psyche.

The story of Tycho Brahe also shows that a scientific revolution often begins with a revolution in measurement. Before theories can be transformed, one must have observations that are precise enough to reveal their limitations. The greatest intellectual upheavals sometimes arise from minute differences noted with extraordinary patience.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that Tycho Brahe was less the advocate of a cosmological model than the founder of a new way of observing the heavens. His demand for precision directly paved the way for Kepler's discoveries, which would permanently transform our understanding of planetary motion.

In the next episode, we shall follow Johannes Kepler. Building on Tycho Brahe's observations, he discovered that the planets do not move in perfect circles but in ellipses, thereby ushering in a new era of astronomy whilst

remaining deeply interested in astrology himself. This dual affiliation makes him one of the most fascinating figures in the entire history of astronomy.

Episode 6: Johannes Kepler: between the astronomical revolution and the reform of astrology

Few scholars have transformed our understanding of the heavens as much as Johannes Kepler. His name is now associated with the three great laws of planetary motion, which paved the way for modern celestial mechanics. Yet Kepler was not merely a great astronomer. He was also an astrologer, drew up horoscopes and spent his entire life reflecting on how to reform a discipline which he often considered to be burdened by traditions lacking a sound foundation.

Born in 1571 in the Holy Roman Empire, Kepler grew up in an era of profound intellectual upheaval. Copernicus's work had already proposed a new organisation of the cosmos, but it remained widely contested. Tycho Brahe's observations revealed discrepancies that the old models struggled to explain. It was against this backdrop that Kepler set out to discover the mathematical laws governing the movements of the planets.

After joining Tycho Brahe in Prague, he inherited, upon Brahe's death, the vast collection of astronomical observations accumulated over more than twenty years. These exceptionally precise data formed the basis of his research. For several years, Kepler tirelessly compared theoretical calculations with actual observations, refusing to overlook even the smallest discrepancies.

His efforts led to a groundbreaking discovery. The planets do not orbit the Sun in perfect circles, as had been believed since antiquity, but in ellipses. This conclusion challenged one of the most deeply rooted ideas in classical astronomy: that of the circle as the perfect figure for celestial motion. Shortly afterwards, Kepler formulated two further laws describing the speed of the planets and the relationship between their periods of revolution and their distance from the Sun. These three laws would become one of the foundations of modern physics.

Despite these revolutionary discoveries, Kepler continued to practise astrology. Universities, princes and private individuals regularly sought his horoscopes, which constituted a significant part of his income. This activity may seem paradoxical in light of his scientific work, but it reflects the intellectual reality of his era, when astronomy and astrology were still closely intertwined.

Kepler, however, adopted an original stance. He openly criticised several astrological practices which he deemed arbitrary or superstitious. In particular, he was very sceptical of certain traditional techniques whose coherence he failed to perceive. On the other hand, he attached particular importance to the geometric aspects between the planets, convinced that mathematical harmonies played an essential role in the organisation of the cosmos.

This quest for a more rational form of astrology set him apart from many of his contemporaries. Rather than rejecting tradition entirely, he sought to retain what he considered its most sound elements whilst discarding those he deemed insufficiently justified. His approach

reflected a constant desire to reconcile observation, mathematics and philosophical reflection.

Kepler also harboured a deep admiration for the order of the Universe. For him, mathematical laws were not merely tools for calculation; they revealed a profound harmony inherent in the structure of the cosmos. This conviction inspired much of his research and explains his relentless pursuit of regularities even in the smallest observed deviations.

Kepler's influence extends far beyond his own century. His laws would later enable Isaac Newton to develop the theory of universal gravitation. They also mark the moment when astronomy gradually became a science based on precise mathematical laws, independent of the old philosophical models.

In the history of astrology, Kepler occupies an equally unique place. He did not break with tradition, but he encouraged a re-examination of it. His demand for consistency, his rejection of unsubstantiated claims and his constant concern to test ideas against observations already foreshadowed several attitudes characteristic of modern scientific thought.

In the context of mindfulness astrology, Kepler is a particularly inspiring figure. His desire to distinguish between what is worth preserving and what needs to be re-examined is in line with an approach that remains relevant today. However, the answer proposed today differs profoundly from his own. Whereas Kepler was still seeking to uncover a causal structure linking heaven and Earth, mindfulness astrology regards the birth chart as a symbolic language that emerges in synchrony with the psyche. The aspects, to which Kepler attached such

importance, can thus be understood not as active forces, but as symbolic structures revealing certain patterns of organisation within conscious experience.

Kepler's story ultimately shows that the greatest discoveries sometimes arise from fidelity to the facts rather than attachment to traditions. It would have been simpler to ignore the slight discrepancies between the observations and the old models. On the contrary, Kepler chose to take them seriously. This intellectual rigour was to transform our understanding of the Universe for the long term.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that Johannes Kepler was both one of the last great astrologers of the Renaissance and one of the founders of modern astronomy. His work marks a unique turning point in the history of science, where the symbolic language inherited from previous centuries encountered a new way of understanding the laws of the cosmos.

In the next episode, we shall meet another giant of this scientific revolution: Galileo Galilei. Thanks to the telescope, he would reveal a sky that no one had ever seen before, definitively turning a new page in the history of astronomy and forever changing our place in the Universe.

Episode 7: Galileo – When the Telescope Revealed a New Sky

In 1609, an Italian scholar turned a still little-known instrument towards the sky: a telescope that he had perfected. This seemingly simple act would transform our view of the Universe forever. For the first time in history, astronomers were able to observe details directly that were

invisible to the naked eye. The man who brought about this revolution was Galileo Galilei, better known as Galileo.
Born in Pisa in 1564, Galileo was educated in mathematics and natural philosophy. From a very early age, he showed a keen interest in observation and experimentation. Unlike many scholars of his time, he did not regard ancient texts as indisputable authorities. For him, nature itself was the true book that one must learn to read.
When the first telescopes from the Netherlands appeared in Europe, Galileo immediately recognised their potential. He significantly improved their optical quality and turned them towards the sky. What he discovered exceeded all expectations. The surface of the Moon was not perfectly smooth, as Aristotelian tradition had held, but covered with mountains, valleys and craters. Celestial bodies were therefore not all perfect spheres.
Shortly afterwards, he observed four small celestial bodies orbiting Jupiter. Now known as the Galilean moons, they constituted a landmark discovery. For the first time, it became evident that not everything revolved around the Earth. This observation provided a powerful argument in favour of the heliocentric system proposed a few decades earlier by Copernicus.
Galileo also discovered the phases of Venus, the countless stars of the Milky Way and sunspots. Each of these observations challenged aspects of the concepts inherited from antiquity. The sky now appeared to be a complex, ever-changing world, infinitely richer than had previously been imagined.
These discoveries did not immediately lead to the abandonment of the geocentric model, but they made the debates much more intense. The old cosmological systems

now had to account for observations they had never envisaged. Discussions gradually moved away from the realm of mere philosophical speculation to be based on directly observable facts.

Galileo vigorously defended this new approach to science. In his view, hypotheses must be tested against observations and reasoning against experiments. This method, based on verification and measurement, would contribute significantly to the birth of modern science. It did not instantly replace the old approaches, but it profoundly altered their rules.

His stance in favour of heliocentrism, however, led him into a famous conflict with certain ecclesiastical authorities. The affair was complex and went far beyond a simple opposition between science and religion. It involved philosophical, theological, political and personal issues. Historians now show that this controversy was far more nuanced than the often-simplified picture that is usually painted of it.

It is worth noting that Galileo never completely lost interest in astrology. Like many Renaissance scholars, he drew up several astrological charts early in his career, notably for certain students or patrons. This activity, however, remained secondary to his astronomical and physical research. His work would above all help to accelerate the gradual separation between astronomy—which had become an experimental science—and astrology, which would henceforth follow a different path.

For mindfulness astrology, Galileo represents a source of inspiration through his insistence on observation and his refusal to rely blindly on tradition. His work serves as a reminder that representations of the heavens must

constantly be tested against astronomical discoveries. On the other hand, the questioning of ancient cosmological models does not call into question the existence of a symbolic language. Once the birth chart is no longer understood as the result of a physical influence from the stars, but as a configuration appearing in synchrony with the psyche, advances in astronomy enrich our representation of the heavens without invalidating this symbolic interpretation.

Galileo's story also shows that an instrument can transform an entire worldview. Before the telescope, certain realities remained invisible. After its invention, it became impossible to ignore what observations revealed. Even the most firmly established ideas must now be tested against the facts.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that Galileo did not merely observe a new sky; he ushered in a new way of looking at the Universe. Thanks to him, observation became one of the foundations of scientific knowledge. This revolution would pave the way for Newton's discoveries and permanently alter the relationship between astronomy, philosophy and astrology.

In the next episode, we shall meet a more low-key yet essential figure: William Lilly. As astronomy continued its revolution, he helped to establish horary astrology as one of the most influential branches of the Western tradition, demonstrating that the two disciplines were now beginning to follow distinct paths.

Episode 8: William Lilly – the last great master of traditional astrology

In the 17th century, Europe was experiencing a paradoxical period. On the one hand, the discoveries of Kepler and Galileo were revolutionising our understanding of the cosmos. On the other, astrology remained extremely popular amongst princes, merchants, doctors and the general public. Astrological almanacs sold in their thousands, and consultations remained commonplace. It was against this backdrop that one of the most influential figures in Western astrology emerged: William Lilly.

Born in 1602 into a modest family in England, William Lilly did not seem destined for an intellectu al career. After several years working as a secretary, he gradually discovered the astrological works then circulating in London's scholarly circles. Fascinated by the discipline, he set about studying it with remarkable perseverance and quickly became one of the most renowned practitioners of his time.

His fame rests largely on the publication, in 1647, of his work **Christian Astrology**. This treatise constitutes one of the most comprehensive syntheses of traditional astrology in the English language. Unlike many earlier works written in Latin, it is addressed directly to English-speaking readers. This decision contributed greatly to its widespread circulation and immense success.

In it, Lilly methodically presents the main branches of astrology: natal astrology, horary astrology, mundane astrology and elective astrology. He explains the methods of calculation, details the rules of interpretation and

illustrates his teachings with numerous practical examples. His book quickly became an indispensable reference for several generations of astrologers.

It was, however, in horary astrology that William Lilly gained his greatest reputation. According to this tradition, the chart drawn up at the precise moment a question is asked allows for a symbolic exploration of the situation in question. Lilly applied this method to a wide variety of subjects: legal matters, lost property, travel, marriages, commercial transactions and political issues. His demonstrations, which were extensively annotated, helped to establish the rules of this practice for the long term.

His fame soon spread beyond specialist circles. During the English Civil War, several of his publications were interpreted as containing allusions to current political events. Some of his predictions earned him immense popularity, but also drew considerable criticism. After the Great Fire of London in 1666, some even accused him, without evidence, of having foretold the event with suspicious accuracy. This controversy testifies to the considerable influence he wielded over public opinion at the time.

William Lilly remained, however, above all a man of method. He constantly emphasised the need to adhere to precise rules of interpretation and not to be carried away by unfounded assertions. His teaching sought to give astrology a coherent structure based on clearly set out principles. This pedagogical approach largely explains the enduring influence of his work.

His career also illustrates a significant historical development. In his day, astronomy and astrology began, once and for all, to follow distinct paths. Astronomers

turned their attention to the study of the physical laws of the Universe, whilst astrologers focused primarily on refining the methods of interpretation inherited from previous centuries. This gradual separation would permanently alter the history of both disciplines.

William Lilly's influence remains considerable to this day. When astrology experienced a revival in the 20th century, several authors rediscovered **Christian Astrology** and drew on its teachings to revive traditional techniques that had long been neglected. His work thus became a bridge between medieval astrology and contemporary trends.

For mindfulness astrology, William Lilly represents the culmination of a rich methodological tradition. The rules he sets out bear witness to several centuries of development in astrological language. However, the meaning attributed to these techniques can now be profoundly reinterpreted. Mindfulness astrology does not seek to answer questions by positing an influence of the stars on events. It regards the birth chart as a symbolic configuration appearing in synchronicity with conscious experience. The methods inherited from tradition can thus be studied for their symbolic value, without reverting to the deterministic framework within which they were historically developed.

Finally, the story of William Lilly reminds us that every tradition eventually reaches a form of fulfilment before entering a new phase of its evolution. His work brings together, organises and transmits several centuries of astrological knowledge at the very moment when the scientific world was beginning to take a different direction. It thus stands as one of the last great monuments of classical astrology.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that William Lilly was one of the most remarkable custodians of the Western astrological tradition. Thanks to his immense work of synthesis, generations of astrologers would continue to study the ancient methods long after a al astronomy had taken a new course. His work marks the end of an era just as much as it paves the way for astrology's future revivals.
In the next episode, we shall see how Isaac Newton's discoveries would permanently transform the scientific understanding of the Universe. With universal gravitation, a new vision of the cosmos would gradually take hold, forcing astrology to redefine its place in a world now governed by the laws of physics.

Episode 9: Isaac Newton – when the laws of the Universe changed the way we looked at the sky

At the end of the 17th century, a new intellectual revolution permanently transformed our understanding of the cosmos. Since the observations of Tycho Brahe, Kepler's laws and Galileo's discoveries, astronomers had been amassing an ever-increasing amount of precise data on the movements of the planets. One crucial question, however, remained: why do the celestial bodies move in this way? It was this question that Isaac Newton would answer.
Born in England in 1642, a few months after Galileo's death, Newton showed an exceptional talent for mathematics and physics from a very early age. After studying at the University of Cambridge, he undertook research that would bring about lasting change in several

fields of science. His genius lay not only in his discoveries, but in his ability to link together phenomena that had previously been thought to be independent of one another. In 1687, his major work, **Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica**, commonly known as the **Principia**, was published. In it, Newton set out the laws of motion and, above all, the law of universal gravitation. According to this theory, all bodies in the Universe attract one another according to a precise mathematical relationship. The same force that causes an apple to fall to the ground also keeps the Moon in orbit around the Earth and the planets in orbit around the Sun.

This idea represented a true revolution. For the first time, a single set of laws explained both terrestrial phenomena and celestial movements. Heaven and Earth were no longer seen as belonging to two separate worlds governed by different principles. The Universe now appeared as a coherent system governed by universal laws.

The implications for astronomy were immense. Kepler's laws finally found their physical explanation. The orbits of the planets could be calculated with ever-greater precision. Eclipses, comets and many other phenomena became predictable thanks to mathematics. Astronomy definitively established itself as a science based on observation, experimentation and calculation.

This new conception of the cosmos profoundly altered the intellectual climate of Europe. Scholars gradually became accustomed to seeking explanations based on verifiable physical mechanisms. Natural phenomena were studied using increasingly rigorous methods. This development would foster the growth of physics, chemistry, geology and many other disciplines.

Astrology did not disappear entirely, however. Many practitioners continued their work, consultations went on, and almanacs remained popular. Nevertheless, the philosophical framework within which it operated gradually changed. Explanations based on celestial influences became increasingly difficult to reconcile with the new physics. Debates thus took a different direction from that which had dominated in previous centuries.

It is interesting to note that Newton himself took an interest in many fields now considered to lie outside the realm of physics. He devoted a significant portion of his time to alchemy, biblical chronology and theology. This diversity shows that the boundaries between disciplines were not yet as clear-cut as we often imagine. The birth of modern science was a gradual process, not an instantaneous break.

Newton's legacy extends far beyond the exact sciences. His way of reasoning had a lasting influence on Enlightenment philosophy. The idea that there are universal laws capable of being discovered by reason fostered a deep confidence in the capabilities of the human mind. This new worldview would shape Western thought as a whole.

For mindfulness astrology, Newton's work represents a decisive moment. By describing with remarkable precision the physical laws governing celestial movements, it leads to an even clearer distinction between two levels of understanding. On the one hand, astronomy explains the trajectories of celestial bodies through observable and measur e physical mechanisms. On the other hand, mindfulness astrology does not seek to add an unknown influence to the laws of nature. It regards the

birth chart as a symbolic configuration appearing in synchronicity with the psyche. Newton's discoveries therefore do not contradict this approach; on the contrary, they help to clarify that the realm of physical causality falls within the scope of astronomy and physics, whilst the birth chart belongs to a symbolic realm of a different nature.

This distinction marks an important step in the evolution of contemporary astrological thought. For centuries, many have attempted to explain astrological correspondences through celestial influences. Advances in physics are making this hypothesis less and less necessary and encourage us to seek other frameworks for interpretation. History thus shows that major scientific discoveries can lead not only to the correction of theories, but also to a profound renewal of the questions themselves.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that Newton did not merely transform astronomy; he profoundly altered the way we think about the Universe. The laws of gravitation offer a new understanding of the cosmos and usher in an era in which the physical sciences will occupy a central place in our understanding of the world. Astrology will now have to find its place within this new intellectual landscape.

In the next and final episode of this season, we shall take stock of the Renaissance. We shall see how this exceptional period profoundly revitalised astronomy, paved the way for modern science and led astrology into a new phase of its history, where its future would depend on its ability to rethink its very foundations.

Episode 10: The Renaissance: The Skies Change, and So Does Astrology

By the end of this tenth season, a major transformation has become evident. For several centuries, astronomy and astrology had progressed hand in hand, sharing the same observations, the same instruments and often the same scholars. The Renaissance did not abruptly sever this link, but it set in motion a shift that would become irreversible. Gradually, each of these disciplines took a different path, driven by what were now distinct objectives.

Advances in observation played a decisive role in this development. Instruments became more precise, ephemerides grew more accurate, and the discoveries of Tycho Brahe, Kepler and Galileo revolutionised the traditional view of the cosmos. The Universe appeared vaster, more complex and more dynamic than had been imagined during Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

The publication of Newton's **Principia** completed this revolution. Celestial movements were now explained on the basis of universal physical laws. Astronomy gradually became an autonomous science, based on observation, mathematics and experimentation. This new way of studying the heavens would bring about a lasting transformation of the sciences as a whole.

Astrology, for its part, continued along its own path. The major techniques developed since antiquity continued to be taught and used. Natal charts, solar returns, progressions, horary queries and other traditional methods remained widely practised. However, their intellectual framework was gradually undermined by new scientific conceptions of the world.

This development does not mean that astrology is disappearing. Quite the contrary: it remains very popular in many social circles. Astrological calendars continue to be printed, consultations remain frequent, and several rulers retain their astrologers. But the discipline is now entering a period in which it will have to gradually redefine its place in the face of the rapid development of the experimental sciences.

The Renaissance also teaches us a more general lesson about the history of knowledge. Major intellectual revolutions do not necessarily destroy the traditions that preceded them. They force them to transform. Some methods are abandoned, others are retained, whilst their interpretation evolves in the light of new discoveries. This process of reworking runs through the entire history of ideas.

The figures we have encountered throughout this series admirably illustrate this transition. Cardan embodies a humanism curious about all disciplines. Nostradamus bears witness to the enduring power of the prophetic imagination. Tycho Brahe ensures the triumph of rigorous observation. Kepler discovered the geometric laws governing the motion of the planets whilst seeking to reform astrology. Galileo transformed the way the heavens were observed. William Lilly brought the classical astrological tradition to its zenith. Finally, Newton offered a new physical understanding of the Universe. Together, they charted the gradual transition from one world to another.

This period also shows that scientific discoveries do not erase humanity’s great questions. People continue to seek meaning in their existence, to ponder their destiny, their

relationships, their trials and their place in the cosmos. The answers evolve, but the questions remain. It is undoubtedly this enduring nature of fundamental questions that explains the longevity of astrology in its many diverse forms.

For mindfulness astrology, the Renaissance was a particularly fruitful period. Astronomical discoveries encouraged a definitive move away from an interpretation based on the physical influence of the stars. They made it possible to distinguish more clearly between the realm of causality—studied by the natural sciences—and that of symbolism. This distinction opened up the possibility of a complete reinterpretation of astrology. The tools inherited from previous centuries retain their descriptive richness, but are now understood as elements of a symbolic language emerging in synchrony with the psyche, rather than as agents of an imposed destiny. This reinterpretation does not break with the history of astrology ; it extends its development by situating it within a renewed philosophical framework.

Looking at this period as a whole, we realise that the Renaissance did not merely transform knowledge; it profoundly altered the way in which we acquire that knowledge. Observing before asserting, measuring before concluding, comparing before believing: these requirements would gradually become the foundations of modern scientific thought. They would have a lasting influence on all disciplines, including those that would have to rethink their own presuppositions.

As we bring this tenth series to a close, we complete a vast journey that began on the plains of Mesopotamia several millennia ago. From the earliest stargazers to the scholars

of the Renaissance, humanity has continually refined its understanding of the heavens. But this journey also shows that every scientific advance invites us to renew our understanding of symbols rather than to freeze them in the conceptions of the past.

Our journey will now continue through the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. We shall explore a period often portrayed as the decline of astrology, but which in reality paved the way for its profound renaissance in the 20th century. Behind the apparent disappearance of a tradition, the conditions for its future renewal are already taking shape.

Season 11 The Age of Doubt: Astrology Confronts Modern Science

Episode 1 When Astrology Left the Universities

At the end of the 17th century, Europe entered a new intellectual era. The discoveries of Kepler, Galileo and Newton profoundly transformed our understanding of the heavens. The experimental sciences underwent spectacular development, whilst universities accorded increasing prominence to mathematics, physics, chemistry and new methods based on observation and experimentation. Against this backdrop, astrology gradually saw its status change.

Contrary to a widely held belief, this shift did not occur suddenly or uniformly. Astrological teachings did not disappear overnight. Depending on the country, the university and local traditions, their decline spanned several decades, and in some cases more than a century. Some institutions abandoned the discipline quickly, whilst others continued to offer certain courses linked to traditional astronomy or astrological medicine.

The most profound change concerns the way in which knowledge is now assessed. Scholars are placing increasing importance on experimental verification, the reproducibility of observations and the formulation of general physical laws. Hypotheses are increasingly put to the test through experiments designed to confirm or refute them. This new method s gradually transforming the entire European intellectual landscape.

In this context, astrological explanations based on the influence of the stars became more difficult to reconcile

with the emerging sciences. The physical mechanisms identified by Newton account for celestial movements with great precision, but they provide no support for the idea that the planets exert any influence on human character or events. Gradually, the two fields began to be perceived as belonging to different spheres.

This development led to a significant institutional shift. Astronomy continued to develop within universities, observatories and scientific academies. Astrology, for its part, gradually withdrew from these official spheres. It continued to be practised, but increasingly in private circles, by independent practitioners or through the publication of almanacs and calendars aimed at the general public.

It would, however, be mistaken to view this as a disappearance. In the 18th century, numerous astrological publications continued to circulate. Consultations persisted in several European regions, and certain folk traditions remained very much alive. Beliefs associated with the cycles of the Moon, the seasons or celestial configurations also retained an important place in everyday culture.

Above all, this period marked a transformation in the relationship between official knowledge and popular knowledge. Astrology gradually ceased to be one of the disciplines taught in academic institutions, yet it continued to occupy a place in the cultural life of many societies. This shift partly explains why its history has become less prominent in traditional accounts of the history of science. Historians now emphasise that this development forms part of a much broader trend towards the specialisation of knowledge. Scientific disciplines are gradually developing

their own methods, their own validation criteria and their own institutions. Whilst this specialisation fosters considerable progress, it also leads to a separation of fields that had long remained closely linked.

In the history of astrology, this period therefore represents less a disappearance than a metamorphosis. For nearly two millennia, it had accompanied the development of astronomy. From now on, each would follow a different path. Astronomy became a physical science of the cosmos. Astrology gradually entered a phase in which its survival would depend less on institutions than on its ability to renew its foundations.

For mindfulness astrology, this development holds particular significance. The decline of astrology in universities should not be understood as the inevitable consequence of a miscalculation, but as the questioning of an explanatory framework based on celestial causality. Once this causality is abandoned, a different understanding becomes possible. The birth chart is no longer intended to explain human phenomena through the physical action of the stars; it becomes a symbolic language appearing in synchronicity with the psyche. This distinction allows us to fully acknowledge the achievements of modern science whilst opening up a new horizon for reflection on the function of the symbol.

History thus shows that great traditions do not necessarily disappear when they leave institutions. They sometimes enter a period of quiet maturation, during which their former certainties are gradually re-examined. This is precisely what began to happen to astrology from the 18th century onwards.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that the real change is not the disappearance of astrology, but the profound shift in its place within society. Having occupied universities, princely courts and major intellectual centres for many centuries, it now continues its history outside scientific institutions. This shift slowly paves the way for the transformations that will lead to its rebirth several generations later.

In the next episode, we shall see how the Age of Enlightenment would challenge many traditions inherited from the past. Astrology would become one of the symbols of these debates between reason, cultural heritage and new conceptions of knowledge, at a time when critical thinking would take on unprecedented importance.

Episode 2 The Age of Enlightenment: Reason versus ancient traditions

The 18th century is often described as the age of reason. Enlightenment philosophers sought to subject knowledge to critical scrutiny, combat superstitions and develop an understanding of the world based on observation, experience and reasoning. This ambition profoundly transformed European intellectual life. Astronomy, physics, chemistry and the natural sciences experienced a remarkable boom, whilst many beliefs inherited from previous centuries were re-examined with fresh eyes.

Against this backdrop, astrology became a subject of debate. Several philosophers believed that explanations based on the influence of the stars did not stand up to the rigours of the scientific method, which was gradually taking hold. The successes of Newtonian mechanics reinforced the idea that natural phenomena should be explained by verifiable physical laws rather than by symbolic correspondences or ancient traditions.

Among the most influential thinkers was Voltaire, who ironically criticised many of the beliefs of his time, including certain astrological practices. His aim, however, went beyond the specific case of astrology. More broadly, he advocated a method based on critical examination, freedom of thought and the questioning of traditional authorities when their assertions could not be justified.

Other philosophers, such as Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, contributed to this vast intellectual endeavour through the Encyclopédie. Their aim was to bring together available knowledge, organise it rationally and foster critical thinking. In this new intellectual

landscape, astrology no longer held the prestigious position it had enjoyed in medieval universities.

This development did not, however, mean that astrologers disappeared. Almanacs continued to be published, certain folk traditions remained very much alive, and practitioners continued to offer consultations. The discipline gradually withdrew from the major scholarly institutions, but it retained a real presence in popular culture and in certain scholarly circles.

The Age of Enlightenment also saw the emergence of a more general reflection on the very nature of knowledge. What criteria distinguish a hypothesis from a proof? What constitutes evidence? What weight should be given to traditions inherited from the past? These questions concerned all disciplines and would make a lasting contribution to the development of the modern sciences.

Meanwhile, progress in astronomy continued in parallel. Observatories multiplied, instruments became more precise and calculations grew ever more reliable. Each new observation strengthened confidence in methods based on measurement and experimentation. This development gradually accentuated the separation between astronomy – which had become a natural science – and astrology, which remained tied to a different mode of interpretation.

Historians point out, however, that the Enlightenment was not a uniform movement. Not all thinkers held exactly the same views, and many continued to take an interest in ancient traditions, alchemy, esotericism or symbols. The intellectual history of this period is therefore more diverse than the simplified dichotomies between reason and belief sometimes suggest.

One of the most enduring legacies of the 18th century lies in the demand for justification. Claims must now be substantiated, tested against the facts and debated publicly. This new culture of debate would profoundly transform all disciplines, whether scientific, philosophical or historical. For mindfulness astrology, this period represents a particularly significant stage. The criticisms levelled by the philosophers of the Enlightenment focused mainly on astrology's causal and deterministic conceptions. In this sense, they encouraged a distinction to be drawn between what falls within the realm of physical laws and what belongs to the realm of symbolism. Mindfulness astrology does not seek to oppose the demands of reason; on the contrary, it draws upon them to propose an interpretation of the birth chart that rejects any influence of the stars and understands celestial correspondences as phenomena of synchronicity between the configuration of the heavens and the psyche. Thus, the achievements of the Enlightenment are not perceived as a threat, but as an invitation to clarify the status of astrological language.

Finally, the history of the 18th century shows that periods of criticism are often also periods of transformation. When a tradition is rigorously scrutinised, it may disappear, become stagnant or be renewed. The future of astrology will depend precisely on how it responds to these new intellectual demands.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that the Age of Enlightenment did not simply pit reason against astrology. It profoundly altered the criteria by which knowledge is assessed. This new way of thinking paved the way for the great scientific and philosophical upheavals of the 19th century, whilst leaving open a

question that remains relevant today: how can we understand the value of a symbol in a world increasingly governed by the scientific method?
In the next episode, we shall see how the 19th century – marked by the Industrial Revolution, positivism and immense scientific progress – led astrology through one of the most difficult periods in its entire history, before the first signs of its revival began to appear.

Episode 3 The 19th century: the wilderness years

The 19th century was an era of major scientific and technical revolutions. The steam engine transformed transport and industry, electricity opened up new horizons, chemistry advanced rapidly, biology underwent a renaissance, and astronomical observatories equipped themselves with ever more sophisticated instruments. Never before had the sciences experienced such rapid progress. This confidence in progress profoundly altered the way in which European societies viewed knowledge.
Against this backdrop, the philosophical movement of positivism, largely associated with Auguste Comte, exerted considerable influence. According to this approach, knowledge could only be considered truly scientific if it was based on observable facts, reproducible experiments and verifiable laws. This conception helped to reinforce the prestige of the experimental sciences and to marginalise disciplines that did not meet these new criteria.
Astronomy then continued to develop with spectacular success. Telescopes became more powerful, new planets were discovered, the first spectral analyses made it

possible to study the composition of stars, and celestial mechanics achieved a remarkable degree of precision. Each decade brought its own share of discoveries, reinforcing confidence in the sciences' ability to explain natural phenomena.

Astrology, on the other hand, is gradually losing the status it once held in academic and intellectual circles. The major scientific academies no longer regard it as a field of research. Specialised publications are becoming rarer, and practitioners now operate on the fringes of established institutions. This development has led several historians to speak of a genuine decline in Western astrology during the 19th century.

It would, however, be inaccurate to speak of its disappearance. In several countries, astrologers continue to publish works, teach their methods and offer consultations. Certain esoteric traditions also retain an interest in the symbolic correspondences between the heavens and humankind. Astrology has ceased to occupy a central position in scholarly culture, but it remains present in more private circles.

This period also saw the emergence of a renewed interest in ancient traditions. The development of archaeology, Egyptology, Assyriology and the comparative history of religions led to the rediscovery of the civilisations in which the earliest forms of astrology had originated. Mesopotamian, Greek and Egyptian texts gradually began to be studied using the methods of modern historical research. This rediscovery of the past would later play an important role in the astrological revival.

At the same time, several spiritual and philosophical movements sought to move beyond overly rigid

dichotomies between science, religion and symbolism. Esoteric study societies emerged in various countries. They took an interest in alchemy, Hermeticism, Kabbalah and astrology, helping to preserve part of this heritage at a time when it seemed to be losing its public influence.

The nineteenth century was thus characterised by two seemingly contradictory movements. On the one hand, the experimental sciences were experiencing spectacular growth. On the other, several cultural currents were showing a growing interest in ancient symbolic traditions. These two dynamics coexisted without always intersecting, paving the way for an intellectual landscape far more diverse than is often assumed.

Historians now regard this period as a time of transition rather than an end. Astrology did not disappear; it simply changed its environment. It gradually ceased to be an institutionalised field of knowledge and became a tradition sustained by more discreet networks, within which it continued to evolve until the early 20th century.

For mindfulness astrology, this ‘crossing of the desert’ is of particular interest. The criticisms levelled in the 19th century mainly concerned explanatory claims based on a physical causality of the stars. They thus encourage us to distinguish even more clearly between the respective spheres of competence of each approach. The natural sciences describe the mechanisms of the physical world; mindfulness astrology does not seek to compete with them. It regards the birth chart as a symbolic structure that emerges in synchrony with the psyche. This clarification of the philosophical framework helps us understand why scientific progress does not necessarily lead to the

abandonment of symbols, but may, on the contrary, invite a profound renewal of our understanding of them.
History shows, finally, that periods of apparent decline are not always periods of sterility. Many ideas continue to mature outside established institutions before re-emerging in a new form. The nineteenth century constitutes precisely one of those moments when an ancient tradition is quietly preparing its own renewal.
As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that the he nineteenth century did not mark the end of astrology, but rather one of the most unexpected, yet significant, stages in its history. Whilst modern science was experiencing a spectacular boom, astrology continued its course within more private circles, where it kept alive tools and symbols that would soon regain new relevance.
In the next episode, we shall see how the first modern esoteric movements helped to revive interest in astrology at the end of the 19th century. Without realising it, they were laying the groundwork for the development of 20th-century astrology.

Episode 4 Esoteric societies: guardians of a forgotten tradition

Whilst the nineteenth century seemed to mark the triumph of the experimental sciences, a more discreet movement was developing in parallel across several countries. Men and women were once again taking an interest in ancient symbolic traditions, Hermeticism, alchemy, Kabbalah and astrology. Their aim was not simply to return to the past, but to rediscover aspects of knowledge which they felt had been neglected by an exclusively materialist view of the

world. It was within these circles that astrology gradually found a new space in which to flourish.

England plays a particularly important role in this revival. Several study groups devote their work to ancient texts, translating forgotten manuscripts and republishing works that have become impossible to find. Greek, medieval and Arabic traditions are being rediscovered with a fresh perspective. This editorial and activity helps to preserve numerous texts that might otherwise have been lost to oblivion.

Among the most influential movements was the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, founded in 1888. This society took an interest in numerous symbolic fields, amongst which astrology occupied a prominent place. The correspondences between the planets, the signs, the elements and other symbolic systems are studied there from an initiatory perspective. Its influence would extend far beyond the circle of its members and leave a lasting mark on Western esotericism.

Other organisations are conducting similar research. They endeavour to bring together traditions from Egypt, Greece, the Arab world, Jewish mysticism and Renaissance philosophy. Astrology was thus placed within a much broader framework of symbols, where it engaged in dialogue with other spiritual disciplines. This approach would foster a more psychological and philosophical interpretation of certain astrological themes in the following century.

The development of the printing press greatly facilitated this renaissance. Specialised journals began to appear, publishing houses reissued forgotten works, and exchanges between researchers became more frequent.

Astrology gradually regained intellectual prominence, even though it remained largely outside universities and scientific institutions.

This period was also marked by a renewed interest in the history of religions, comparative mythology and ancient civilisations. Archaeological discoveries in Egypt and Mesopotamia shed new light on the origins of numerous symbolic traditions . Astrology benefited indirectly from these advances, which placed its history within a much broader context than that of contemporary practices alone.

It is important to emphasise, however, that these movements remain highly diverse. Some favour a mystical approach, others a scholarly study of ancient texts, whilst still others seek to develop new philosophical syntheses. There is therefore not a single ‘renaissance’ of astrology, but several strands that would sometimes evolve independently of one another.

This diversity paved the way for a major shift. Whilst medieval astrology had developed primarily around prediction and the study of events, several authors began to take a greater interest in personality, inner development and the symbolic dimension of the birth chart. This shift in focus already foreshadowed the major transformations of the 20th century.

Historians now consider that these esoteric societies played a vital role in preserving a cultural heritage threatened with extinction. Without their translations, publications and research, a significant proportion of ancient astrological texts would probably have been lost. They thus served as a bridge between the classical tradition and modern authors.

For mindfulness astrology, this period is of particular interest. It shows that the survival of a tradition sometimes depends less on institutional recognition than on the dedication of a few passionate researchers. However, it also serves as a reminder that simply preserving a heritage is not enough. Each era is invited to reinterpret the symbols in the light of its own discoveries. Mindfulness astrology forms part of this continuity: it embraces the immense richness of the astrological heritage whilst offering a renewed philosophical framework, based on synchronicity, the absence of causal influence from the stars, and the recognition of consciousness as a fundamental reality.

The history of this quiet renaissance ultimately shows that an idea can span the centuries without losing its vitality. Even when it leaves the major institutions, it can continue to evolve within smaller circles before regaining a wider audience. This is precisely what happened to astrology at the end of the 19th century.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that esoteric societies were far more than mere secret groups. They served as centres for the transmission, research and preservation of a symbolic heritage dating back several millennia. Thanks to them, astrology was able to bridge the gap between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries without losing the thread of its history.

In the next episode, we shall meet the man whom many regard as the true architect of the modern astrological renaissance: Alan Leo. His work marked a decisive turning point by gradually steering astrology towards the study of personality and inner life.

Episode 5: Alan Leo – the father of modern astrology

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, astrology seemed to have lost the place it once held in universities and major scientific centres. Yet one man was to profoundly transform its future. Through his teaching, his publications and his approach to interpreting birth charts, Alan Leo ushered in a new era in the history of astrology. Many historians now regard him as the principal architect of astrology's modern renaissance.

Born in England in 1860 as William Frederick Allan, he later adopted the pseudonym Alan Leo, under which he would become famous. From an early age, he took an interest not only in astrology but also in the philosophical and spiritual movements that were then experiencing a resurgence. His career unfolded against the intellectual backdrop of the late Victorian era, characterised by a renewed interest in symbolic traditions and the great questions concerning the nature of humankind.

Unlike many astrologers of previous centuries, Alan Leo no longer placed prediction at the centre of his practice. He believed that a birth chart primarily serves to provide a better understanding of an individual's personality, qualities, difficulties and potential for development. This shift marked a significant break with traditional astrology, which placed far greater emphasis on external events.

This new approach quickly found a wide audience. Readers identified more closely with an astrology that spoke of their character, their aptitudes and their aspirations than with a series of predictions about their

future. Alan Leo thus helped to bring astrology closer to the personal concerns that would become central in the 20th century.

His publishing activities played a decisive role. He founded journals, published numerous books and set up training courses designed to disseminate astrological knowledge more widely. Thanks to the printing press, his books circulated in many countries and influenced several generations of practitioners. Astrology gradually regained the prominence it had largely lost during the 19th century.

Alan Leo also simplified certain aspects of the tradition. The extremely complex techniques inherited from the Middle Ages featured less prominently in his teaching. He favoured a more accessible presentation of the planets, signs, houses and aspects. This simplification made it easier to learn astrology and contributed significantly to its spread amongst a much wider audience.

However, his ideas are not universally accepted. Some traditional astrologers criticised him for abandoning some of the ancient methods in favour of an approach deemed too psychological. Others, on the contrary, considered that this development enabled astrology to adapt to the expectations of a society profoundly transformed by advances in science and psychology. These debates would accompany the entire evolution of modern astrology.

Alan Leo's influence extends far beyond his own era. The major astrological schools of thought of the 20th century would often draw on his interest in personality, temperament and inner resources. Even when certain authors moved away from his ideas, they continued to work within the general framework he had helped to establish.

His work also coincided with the rise of modern psychology. Although he did not draw directly on the work of the leading psychologists of his time, his interest in personality traits paved the way for the convergence that would later take place between astrology and psychology, particularly in the mid-20th century.

Alan Leo's story shows that a tradition can survive by embracing change. He did not abandon the symbolic foundations of astrology, but he profoundly altered the questions it sought to answer. The focus on the future gradually gave way to self-knowledge. This shift constitutes one of the most significant transformations in the entire history of Western astrology.

For mindfulness astrology, Alan Leo represents a crucial milestone, but not an end in itself. His intuition that the birth chart speaks first and foremost of the human being rather than merely of events opens up a fruitful path. However, mindfulness astrology takes this a step further. It does not merely regard the birth chart as a reflection of a personality or character; it understands it as the symbolic mirror of the psyche, appearing in perfect synchronicity with embodied consciousness. The path no longer consists of improving a psychological self, but of recognising, through the very movements of the psyche, the presence of the consciousness that illuminates them. Thus, the transformation initiated by Alan Leo finds its continuation in an approach that goes beyond psychology to embrace the dimension of mindfulness.

Looking back at this period with the benefit of hindsight, we realise that major developments often arise from a shift in perspective rather than a change in tools. The planets, signs, houses and aspects remain the same; it is the way in

which they are understood that undergoes a profound transformation. This evolution explains why 20th-century astrology differs so greatly from that of previous centuries.
As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that Alan Leo was much more than just a best-selling author. He was one of the key architects of the transition from classical to modern astrology. Thanks to him, a tradition dating back several millennia found new vigour by refocusing on an understanding of the human being. His legacy paved the way for the major psychological movements that would shape the entire 20th century.
In the next episode, we shall see how the convergence of astrology and psychology – notably through the work of Carl Gustav Jung – would profoundly transform the way the birth chart is interpreted and lay the groundwork for many contemporary approaches.

Episode 6 Carl Gustav Jung: when psychology rediscovered the symbols of the heavens

At the start of the 20th century, astrology experienced a quiet but profound revival. Following the work of Alan Leo, many authors were now less interested in predicting events than in understanding the personality. At the same time, a new discipline was developing rapidly: psychology. Among its leading figures, one man was to play a decisive role in the way astrology would gradually be reinterpreted. That man was Carl Gustav Jung.
Born in Switzerland in 1875, Jung studied medicine before specialising in psychiatry. His early research led him to collaborate with Sigmund Freud, becoming for a time one of his closest associates. The two men shared a common

interest in the unconscious, but their views gradually diverged. This split gave rise to the analytical psychology developed by Jung.

Unlike Freud, who focused primarily on personal experiences and childhood conflicts, Jung broadened the perspective considerably. He introduced the concept of the collective unconscious, that is, a set of universal psychological structures common to all humanity. According to him, these structures manifest themselves notably through myths, dreams, fairy tales, the great religious traditions and the symbols found in all cultures.

To describe these universal structures, Jung uses the term ‘archetypes’. An archetype is not a precise image, but a fundamental form of organisation of psychological experience. The hero, the mother, the shadow, the sage, the child, and the anima and animus are some of the best-known examples. These figures appear in various forms across different cultures, but they reflect psychological dynamics deeply rooted in human experience.

This approach naturally led Jung to take an interest in symbolic traditions. He studied alchemy, mythology, comparative religion, hermetic texts and, on several occasions, astrology. He did not regard symbols as mere superstitions, but as possible expressions of universal psychological processes. For him, the great symbolic systems served as maps enabling the observation of certain movements of the psyche.

One of his most famous contributions is the concept of synchronicity, developed in the mid-20th century. Jung uses this term to describe the simultaneous occurrence of two events linked not by a cause-and-effect relationship, but by a shared meaning. From this perspective, certain

external phenomena can resonate with an inner state without it being necessary to assume a physical influence between them. This idea was to exert a considerable influence on many astrologers.

Jung himself took an occasional interest in astrology in his clinical research. He observed that certain astrological symbols sometimes seemed to correspond to psychological dynamics encountered in his patients. However, he did not seek to demonstrate any astral causality. His interest centred mainly on the symbolic value of the birth chart and its potential to shed light on certain structures of the psyche.

This approach opened up an entirely new perspective. For the first time in several centuries, astrology could be considered independently of the hypothesis of a physical influence from the stars. For many authors, the birth chart gradually became a symbolic language capable of supporting a process of self-knowledge. This development would profoundly shape the entire field of psychological astrology in the 20th century.

Jung's influence extends far beyond the field of astrology. His work has inspired psychology, philosophy, the study of religion, literature, art and even certain contemporary reflections on consciousness. His work has helped to restore intellectual legitimacy to the study of symbols, which had long been marginalised by the development of the experimental sciences.

In the context of mindfulness astrology, Jung plays a key role, although several points require clarification. His concept of synchronicity forms one of the foundations for moving beyond astrology's traditional causal models. However, mindfulness astrology differs from these in

several respects. It does not reduce the birth chart to a map of the collective unconscious, nor to a mere psychological interpretation of archetypes. It regards the psyche itself as a manifestation of Consciousness—understood not as a mental function, but as the fundamental reality within which the world, the heavens, the body and inner experience all emerge simultaneously. From this perspective, the synchronicity between the celestial configuration and the psyche does not stem from an isolated psychological mystery; it expresses a deeper unity of conscious experience. The birth chart thus becomes the symbolic mirror of the psyche's movements, whilst true freedom lies in the recognition of Consciousness, which illuminates these movements without ever being reduced to them.

Jung's work also reminds us that symbols do not necessarily need to be believed in order to be studied. They can be observed, examined, compared and understood as expressions of a universal human experience. This approach profoundly transformed the way astrology was viewed during the 20th century.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that Carl Gustav Jung did not merely transform psychology. He also provided astrology with a new framework for reflection, within which symbolic language regained its full depth without having to rely on a physical causality between the stars and human beings. His legacy continues to inspire many researchers today, even though the interpretations it has given rise to remain diverse.

In the next episode, we shall see how this convergence of psychology and astrology gave rise to new movements during the 20th century. Authors such as Dane Rudhyar

proposed a profoundly renewed vision of the birth chart, focused on personal development and the evolution of consciousness.

Episode 7: Dane Rudhyar – Astrology Becomes a Path to Inner Development

In the mid-20th century, astrology experienced a new resurgence. Having regained its place thanks to the work of Alan Leo, and having been profoundly influenced by Carl Gustav Jung's reflections on symbols and synchronicity, it gradually shifted towards a more inward-looking understanding of the human experience. Among the authors who would accompany this transformation, none would exert such a profound influence as Dane Rudhyar.

Born in Paris in 1895 as Daniel Chennevière, Rudhyar moved to the United States at a very young age, where he developed a body of work of astonishing diversity. A composer, painter, writer, philosopher and astrologer, he refused to separate the various fields of human creativity. For him, art, philosophy, psychology and astrology were all part of the same quest for the meaning of existence.

When he discovered astrology, it was still largely characterised by traditional approaches centred on external events. Rudhyar believed that this approach no longer addressed the questions of his time. He therefore proposed a profound reinterpretation of the birth chart. This was no longer viewed primarily as a tool for prediction, but as a symbolic representation of the unique way in which each human being participates in the experience of life.

This new perspective led Rudhyar to speak of humanistic astrology. Inspired by the work of the nascent field of humanistic psychology, he considered that human beings possess a potential for growth, creativity and fulfilment that cannot be reduced to a set of deterministic factors. The birth chart thus becomes a map of possibilities rather than a catalogue of inevitable events.

He also emphasised the notion of wholeness. The various elements of the chart should not be interpreted in isolation, but as components of an overall system. Each planet, each sign, each house and each aspect takes on its true meaning within the chart's overall coherence. This systemic view was to exert a lasting influence on many contemporary astrologers.

Rudhyar took a particular interest in cycles. Transits, progressions and the various phases of life are interpreted as moments of inner transformation rather than as periods dictating specific events. The emphasis gradually shifts towards the way in which a person can consciously embrace the experiences they go through.

His work met with widespread success amongst an audience seeking personal development. Against the cultural backdrop of the 1960s and 1970s, characterised by a growing interest in psychology, the philosophies of the Arab-Persian world and holistic approaches to the human being, humanistic astrology emerged as a response to the expectations of a generation eager to understand itself better.

This development profoundly altered the image of the astrologer. The astrologer was no longer seen merely as an interpreter of future events, but as a guide capable of helping a person to better understand their psychological

functioning, their resources and the stages of their life. This new approach would have a lasting influence on astrological practice in many countries.

Rudhyar's contribution extends far beyond mere astrological techniques. He offers a genuine philosophy of life, based on the idea that every individual is part of a global process of transformation. His work invites us to view the birth chart as a means of reflecting on the meaning of life rather than merely as a tool for prediction.

For mindfulness astrology, Dane Rudhyar represents a decisive stage in the modern evolution of astrology. His rejection of fatalism, his interest in the birth chart as a whole, and his desire to make astrology an instrument of self-knowledge open up fruitful new perspectives. However, several fundamental differences emerge. Rudhyar grounds his approach in a philosophy of personal evolution and the development of consciousness. Mindfulness astrology, by contrast, distinguishes the psyche from Consciousness itself. It does not regard Consciousness as a reality that evolves gradually, but as the fundamental presence—always already complete—within which the movements of the psyche arise. The birth chart therefore does not describe an evolution of Consciousness, but rather the specific ways in which the psyche manifests or veils this presence. Thus, the approach does not consist of becoming something else, but of recognising what is already fully present behind psychological conditioning.

This distinction allows us to preserve the immense richness of the symbolic language developed by Rudhyar whilst giving it a different orientation. The cycles of life, transits and configurations of the birth chart become less

the stages of an evolutionary process and more opportunities for to recognise the mechanisms of psychological identification and to return to conscious presence.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that Dane Rudhyar was one of the great innovators of twentieth-century astrology. Thanks to him, the birth chart ceased to be primarily a map of events and became a privileged medium for reflection on the human experience. His influence remains considerable, even though contemporary approaches continue to offer various reinterpretations of his work.

In the next episode, we shall see how astrology continued its renaissance during the second half of the 20th century. New movements, new schools and new techniques would emerge, whilst computing and the first astrology software programmes would profoundly transform the day-to-day practice of astrologers.

Episode 8: The Renaissance of Contemporary Astrology

From the 1960s onwards, astrology experienced a revival of unexpected magnitude. After more than a century of relative obscurity, it gradually regained a place in the cultural life of many countries. This revival did not correspond to the return of a single ancient tradition, but to the emergence of a wide variety of schools of thought, methods and approaches. Contemporary astrology has become a forum for dialogue where historical heritage, psychology, philosophy and new technologies converge.

The growing interest in personal development plays an important role in this evolution. Many people are seeking tools to help them better understand their personality, their relationships and the major stages of their lives. In this context, the birth chart is increasingly presented as a symbolic map of inner experience rather than as a tool intended to predict future events.

Several schools of thought are developing simultaneously. Some are rediscovering traditional techniques from antiquity and the Middle Ages, whilst others are building on psychological approaches inspired by Alan Leo, Carl Gustav Jung or Dane Rudhyar. Still others are exploring the spiritual, philosophical or relational dimensions of the birth chart. This diversity contributes to the vitality of contemporary astrology, but it also makes it more difficult to arrive at a single definition of the discipline.

Advances in information technology are profoundly transforming the practice of astrology. Until recently, calculating a birth chart could sometimes take several hours. The first pieces of software now make it possible to obtain highly accurate birth charts in a matter of seconds. Astrologers can now devote more time to interpretation than to the calculations themselves. This development also facilitates the study of thousands of charts and the pursuit of new statistical or comparative research.

The spread of personal computers, followed by the internet, further accelerated this trend. Books became more accessible, specialist journals were distributed more widely, and astrologers from different continents exchanged their work with a ease previously unknown. International associations sprang up, conferences brought together practitioners from a wide variety of backgrounds,

and debates were enriched by a multitude of cultural perspectives.

This period also saw a renewed interest in recently discovered celestial bodies. Following the gradual incorporation of Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, many astrologers are exploring the significance of asteroids, centaurs, trans-Neptunian objects and other bodies in the Solar System. This research reflects a constant desire to expand the symbolic language as astronomy reveals new elements of the cosmos.

At the same time, several schools of thought are seeking to trace the historical origins of astrology. Translations of Greek, Latin, Arabic and medieval texts are becoming increasingly common. Historians are highlighting the richness of ancient traditions, which are sometimes very different from contemporary practices. This rediscovery is fuelling a fruitful dialogue between innovation and heritage.

The diversity of approaches also gives rise to debates. Some authors advocate a resolutely psychological form of astrology, others favour traditional methods, whilst still others pursue statistical or symbolic research. This plurality of interpretations shows that contemporary astrology is not a single system, but a collection of schools of thought, each pursuing its own line of inquiry.

One of the most profound changes undoubtedly concerns the emphasis placed on the client's responsibility. The astrologer is no longer seen merely as someone who predicts the future, but as a discussion partner who facilitates reflection on lived experience. This shift is gradually transforming the ethics of the consultation and

the way in which the birth chart is used in the helping relationship.

For mindfulness astrology, this period presents particularly favourable conditions. The questioning of strictly deterministic approaches, the interest in psychology, the rediscovery of ancient traditions and the considerable advances in astronomy are creating the conditions for a new synthesis. Mindfulness astrology forms part of this movement whilst offering a specific direction. It embraces the full range of technical knowledge developed over the centuries, but reinterprets it on the basis of a few fundamental principles: the absence of any causal influence from the stars; synchronicity between the heavens and the psyche; the distinction between the psyche and Consciousness; and the recognition of the birth chart as a symbolic mirror of conscious experience. This perspective allows for a full dialogue with contemporary knowledge without sacrificing the depth of astrological language.

The history of this renaissance ultimately shows that a tradition can have many lives. Having successively been a priestly practice, a scholarly discipline, an academic field of study, and then a marginalised tradition, astrology has regained a new vitality by reinventing itself in response to the major questions of its time. This capacity for adaptation largely explains its remarkable longevity.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that the second half of the 20th century marks not so much the return of a single form of ast s the birth of a plurality of astrologies. Each offers its own way of understanding the birth chart, the symbols and the human experience. This

diversity heralds the debates, innovations and new syntheses that will characterise the 21st century.
In the next episode, we shall see how the rise of the internet, specialised software and global databases will further transform the practice of astrology, ushering in an era in which the calculation of a birth chart will become accessible to all, whilst interpretation will remain, more than ever, at the heart of the astrologer's work.

Episode 9 Computing and the Internet: a new astrological revolution

At the end of the 20th century, a new technological revolution profoundly transformed the practice of astrology. Following the invention of the printing press, which had enabled the widespread distribution of books and ephemerides, the advent of personal computing and subsequently the Internet in turn changed the way birth charts were calculated, studied and shared. Within a few decades, tasks that had once required several hours of work became almost instantaneous.
For centuries, drawing up a birth chart required a thorough mastery of astronomical tables, ephemerides and numerous manual calculations. Astrologers had to determine planetary positions, calculate houses, check time zones and make various corrections. This technical phase accounted for a significant part of their work. The first astrological software programmes, which appeared in the 1970s and 1980s, simplified this work considerably.
The advent of personal computers accelerated this development. Calculations became extremely precise, rapid and accessible. The risk of errors fell sharply, and

astrologers could now devote more time to the symbolic study of the chart rather than its technical construction. This development also facilitated comparative research involving a large number of charts.

The internet then transformed the dissemination of knowledge. Books became easier to find, articles circulated rapidly, lectures were recorded and shared, whilst astrology schools offered distance learning courses. Exchanges between practitioners from different continents became a daily occurrence. Astrology thus took on a truly international dimension.

At the same time, software continues to improve. It is gradually incorporating asteroids, centaurs, trans-Neptunian objects, fixed stars, various house systems and a multitude of traditional and modern techniques. What once required several libraries can now fit onto a single computer or even a mobile phone.

This ease of access is also changing public expectations. Numerous websites allow users to obtain a birth chart for free in a matter of minutes. Automated interpretations are becoming increasingly common. Mobile apps offer personalised horoscopes, daily notifications and instant analyses. Astrology is thus becoming part of the daily lives of millions of people.

However, this democratisation has several limitations. Automatically generated interpretations often rely on adding up isolated meanings, without taking the overall coherence of the chart properly into account. Yet, for centuries, the finest astrologers have emphasised the need to understand the entire symbolic structure rather than merely accumulating fragmentary interpretations. Digital

tools facilitate calculation, but they cannot replace experience, reflection or the ability to listen attentively.

Computing also opens up new avenues for research. Large databases make it possible to study thousands of charts, compare different methods of interpretation or explore certain statistical patterns. Although such research gives rise to methodological debates, it reflects a growing desire to better understand how astrological language works.

Finally, social media plays a significant role in the dissemination of contemporary astrology. It enables numerous authors, teachers and researchers to share their work with a wide audience. This new visibility promotes a diversity of approaches, but it also leads to the rapid circulation of information that is sometimes inaccurate. As in many other fields, the abundance of content makes it even more important to exercise critical thinking.

For mindfulness astrology, this technological revolution presents both an opportunity and a challenge. Digital tools provide instant access to a highly accurate representation of the sky and facilitate the study of increasingly sophisticated techniques. However, they also serve as a reminder of a crucial distinction: calculation is a matter for computing, whilst understanding is a matter for consciousness. No software can replace the quality of presence, the attention paid to lived experience, or the discernment required to recognise, within the birth chart, a symbolic language that emerges in synchrony with the psyche. Technology enriches the astrologer's work, but it cannot replace the act of understanding.

This development also invites us to reflect on the role of artificial intelligence. Capable of rapidly analysing vast quantities of information, it can facilitate access to

knowledge, compare traditions or assist in the study of astrological configurations. However, like other digital tools, it does not obviate the need for philosophical reflection on the meaning of symbols, nor for human encounter, which remains at the heart of any process of self-knowledge.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that computing and the internet have profoundly transformed astrology without altering its fundamental questions. Calculations have become almost instantaneous, knowledge circulates freely and exchanges are global. Yet the real challenge has remained unchanged since the earliest Mesopotamian observers: how do we make sense of the representation of the heavens?

In the next and final episode of this series, we will take stock of this long period spanning the 17th to the 20th centuries. We will see how astrology has weathered criticism, scientific transformations, philosophical revivals and technological revolutions before entering the 21st century, where new questions still await it.

Episode 10 Four Centuries of Transformation: How Astrology Reinvented Itself

As this eleventh series draws to a close, one thing is clear. The history of astrology between the 17th and 20th centuries is not one of linear decline, but of profound transformation. Advances in astronomy, physics, philosophy, psychology and technology gradually altered the place astrology occupied in society. Far from disappearing, it was forced to rethink its foundations, its

objectives and the way it engaged with other forms of knowledge.

The 17th century marked the beginning of a decisive separation between astronomy and astrology. The discoveries of Kepler, Galileo and Newton demonstrated that celestial movements obey physical laws of remarkable precision. Astronomy gradually became an autonomous science, whilst astrology gradually lost its place in universities and academies. This change did not merely affect institutions; it profoundly transformed the way in which the heavens were understood.

The Age of Enlightenment continued this evolution by emphasising the importance of critical thinking, proof and the experimental method. Philosophers called for a re-examination of traditions inherited from the past ‘ ’ in the light of reason. Astrology thus became the subject of widespread criticism, particularly when it claimed to explain human phenomena through the causal influence of the stars. This re-evaluation left a lasting mark on its history.

The nineteenth century is often seen as a period of decline. The sciences experienced a spectacular boom, whilst astrology continued to exist within much more restricted circles. Yet this low profile was quietly paving the way for a revival. Historical research, societies dedicated to the study of symbols and the rediscovery of ancient texts preserved a heritage that would soon regain a new vitality.

The 20th century marked the beginning of a new phase. Thanks to Alan Leo, astrology turned its focus towards understanding personality. The work of Carl Gustav Jung restored a prominent role to symbols and the concept of synchronicity. Dane Rudhyar developed a humanistic

form of astrology centred on inner development. Finally, computing and the internet have made access to astrological charts more widespread and have facilitated the global dissemination of astrological knowledge.

These four centuries reveal a remarkable evolution. Astrology has gradually shifted from a discipline largely focused on predicting events to a field of inquiry increasingly centred on understanding the human experience. The questions change, the methods evolve, but the birth chart remains the medium for a dialogue between the heavens and humankind.

This history also highlights a distinction that has become essential. The natural sciences study the physical mechanisms of the world through observation, experimentation and mathematics. Astrology, when it refrains from presenting itself as a causal theory, operates on a different plane. It offers a symbolic language whose value depends less on a physical explanation than on the way in which it sheds light on lived experience. This clarification constitutes one of the major achievements of the contemporary era.

The transformations we have traced also show that the most enduring traditions are those that are able to engage with the discoveries of their time. Astrology has survived the centuries neither by remaining static nor by renouncing its heritage, but by gradually reinterpreting its symbols in the light of new questions. This capacity for renewal largely explains its enduring presence across very different historical contexts.

For mindfulness astrology, this long evolution leads to a unique synthesis. Advances in astronomy and the contemporary sciences call for the definitive abandonment

of any conception based on the influence of the stars. Contributions from psychology enable a better understanding of the mechanisms of the psyche, without, however, confusing them with Consciousness itself. Research into synchronicity opens up the possibility of a different perspective on the correspondences between the heavens and human experience. Drawing on these various traditions, mindfulness astrology offers an interpretation in which the birth chart becomes a symbolic mirror of the psyche, appearing in perfect synchronicity with a person's birth and life experiences. The aim is no longer to predict a destiny or to develop a supposedly incomplete consciousness, but to recognise, at the very heart of psychological processes, the ever-free presence of Consciousness.

This perspective also allows us to reinterpret the entire history of astrology in a new light. The ancient Mesopotamian observers, the Greek philosophers, the Arab scholars, the medieval astrologers, the Renaissance humanists and modern authors appear as the various stages of a single intellectual adventure. Each has enriched the symbolic language of the heavens with the knowledge and questions of their own era. The history of astrology thus becomes that of a tradition in constant transformation.

As we bring this eleventh season to a close, we realise that centuries of doubt have not led to the disappearance of astrology, but to its profound renewal. Criticism, scientific discoveries and cultural shifts have gradually compelled this tradition to clarify its foundations and rethink its relationship with the world. This long journey directly paves the way for the questions of the 21st century.

Our journey is now entering its final major stage. Season 12 will be devoted to contemporary astrology and the challenges that lie ahead. We will explore new research, current debates, contributions from neuroscience, contemporary physics and the philosophy of consciousness, before discovering how mindfulness astrology fits into this history spanning several millennia as a new approach to interpreting the birth chart, remaining faithful to the symbolic heritage whilst definitively breaking free from determinism and astral causality.

Series 12 Astrology in the 21st century: new perspectives, new challenges

Episode 1 Astrology Today: A Mosaic of Schools of Thought

After more than five thousand years of history, astrology is more vibrant and diverse than ever. Present on every continent, taught in schools, and disseminated through books, lectures, websites and digital apps, it now reaches millions of people. Yet it is becoming increasingly difficult to speak of ‘astrology’ in the singular. The 21st century has seen the coexistence of a multitude of schools of thought that share neither the same methods, nor the same objectives, nor the same philosophical foundations.

Some astrologers follow the classical tradition, relying mainly on techniques inherited from antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Others favour psychological approaches inspired by Alan Leo, Carl Gustav Jung or Dane Rudhyar. Still others conduct research centred on human relationships, life cycles, business, world events or the latest astronomical discoveries. This diversity testifies to astrology’s remarkable ability to adapt over the centuries.

The growth of international exchange also fosters an encounter between various cultural traditions. Western, Indian, Chinese and Tibetan astrology, along with other symbolic systems, are now more readily accessible. Whilst each has its own history, methods and vocabulary, their coexistence gives rise to numerous comparative reflections and enriches our understanding of the different

ways in which civilisations have sought to establish a dialogue between the heavens and human experience.

Advances in astronomy have also profoundly transformed the contemporary astrological landscape. New celestial objects are regularly discovered. Asteroids, centaurs, trans-Neptunian objects and dwarf planets are gradually broadening the scope of symbolic inquiry. This development serves as a reminder that the language of astrology has never been static and that it continues to evolve in step with astronomical discoveries.

At the same time, digital tools are making astrology more accessible than ever. In a matter of seconds, anyone can obtain a highly accurate birth chart, explore different interpretation techniques or consult thousands of digitised works. This ease of access promotes the dissemination of knowledge, but it also raises new questions regarding the quality of information, the training of practitioners and the discernment required in the face of the profusion of available content.

Public expectations have also changed profoundly. Many people are no longer primarily seeking predictions, but wish to better understand their psychological functioning, their relationships, their deepest aspirations or the major stages of their lives. Astrology is increasingly sought after as a tool for personal reflection rather than as a means of foretelling the future.

This development also fosters dialogue with other disciplines. Exchanges with psychology, philosophy, the history of religions, anthropology, cognitive science and the study of myths are on the increase. Without erasing the differences in methods and aims, these encounters help to

enrich our understanding of the function of symbols in human experience.

This diversity, however, carries a risk. Under the single term ‘astrology’, approaches that are sometimes very different from one another coexist today. Some remain wedded to deterministic conceptions, others favour a psychological interpretation, whilst still others develop a wide variety of spiritual or philosophical perspectives. This plurality makes it essential to clarify the underlying assumptions on which each approach is based.

One of the great challenges of the 21st century lies precisely in making these foundations explicit. Any astrological practice implies a certain conception of the world, of freedom, of consciousness, of time and of symbols. The differences between schools often stem less from the techniques employed than from the answers given to these fundamental questions.

For mindfulness astrology, this situation presents an opportunity. It allows us to propose a clearly defined approach, based on a number of explicit principles: the absence of any causal influence from the stars; the birth chart understood as a symbolic mirror of the psyche; synchronicity between the celestial configuration and human experience; the distinction between the psyche and Consciousness; and the recognition of the latter as a fundamental reality. This clarification does not seek to oppose other schools of thought, but rather to make explicit the philosophical framework within which astrological language takes on its meaning. It also invites us to distinguish between the symbolic tools—largely inherited from tradition—and the philosophical interpretations that may evolve over the centuries.

When we observe contemporary astrology through the lens of its history, a sense of continuity emerges. From the earliest Mesopotamian observers to today's researchers, techniques, cosmological models and philosophies have changed profoundly. Yet one and the same question has persisted through the millennia: is there a meaningful relationship between the heavens and human experience? Each era answers this question according to its own knowledge and worldview.

As we bring this first episode of the final season to a close, we discover that 21st-century astrology is not a single system, but a vast landscape where ancient traditions, contemporary innovations and philosophical inquiry engage in dialogue. This diversity is both its richness and its greatest challenge. More than ever before, understanding astrology now requires an understanding of the foundations upon which each approach builds its interpretation of the heavens.

In the next episode, we shall explore one of the great contemporary questions: can astrology engage in dialogue with modern science? We shall see how debates surrounding causality, synchronicity, complexity and the philosophy of science are now opening up new avenues for reflection, without conflating the respective domains of science and symbolism.

Episode 2 Astrology and science: an ongoing dialogue

For several centuries, the relationship between astrology and science has been the subject of much debate. For some, advances in astronomy, physics and biology have

definitively invalidated all forms of astrology. For others, such criticisms are based on an incomplete understanding of what astrology actually seeks to express. Between these two positions, dialogue often remains difficult, as it centres less on astrological techniques than on the philosophical assumptions underpinning them.

Modern science has been built around a particularly rigorous method. It seeks to explain natural phenomena by formulating hypotheses that can be tested through observation, experimentation and the reproducibility of results. Scientific theories always remain open to correction or replacement if new observations contradict them. This approach has enabled considerable progress in our understanding of the physical world.

When presented as a theory asserting that the stars exert a physical influence on human behaviour or events, astrology naturally comes into conflict with this method. To date, there is no recognised physical mechanism to explain such an influence, nor is there a scientific consensus establishing that astrological interpretations are based on proven causal relationships. It is primarily this causal claim that has been called into question by the development of modern science.

However, this criticism does not necessarily apply to all forms of astrology. Since the 20th century, several authors have proposed alternative frameworks of understanding, in which the birth chart is no longer regarded as the cause of events, but as a symbolic language for organising and interpreting certain aspects of human experience. These approaches shift the debate away from physical causality.

The concept of synchronicity developed by Carl Gustav Jung has played an important role in this development.

Without claiming to constitute a scientific theory of astrological phenomena, it offers an alternative way of viewing certain meaningful coincidences. Whilst this perspective is not the subject of scientific consensus, it has profoundly influenced several schools of thought within contemporary astrology by opening up a space for reflection situated more within the fields of philosophy and psychology than in that of physics.

Other debates today concern the philosophy of science. Researchers are examining the nature of scientific models, the limits of each discipline, the role of the observer, and the various ways of understanding reality. These debates do not validate astrology, but they serve as a reminder that not all human questions necessarily fall within the same type of approach. Understanding a physical phenomenon and interpreting a symbol are two distinct intellectual activities.

The humanities already illustrate this diversity of approaches. History, psychology, anthropology, linguistics and the study of myths do not operate according to the same methods as particle physics or celestial mechanics. Each develops tools suited to its subject matter. This diversity invites us to reflect carefully on what we expect from a theory and the type of questions it claims to answer.

Contemporary astrology finds itself precisely confronted with this need for clarification. If it claims to explain human phenomena through the physical action of the stars, it enters the realm of the natural sciences and is subject to their criteria of evaluation. If, on the other hand, it presents itself as a symbolic language or a method of interpreting experience, the discussion falls more within the realm of hermeneutics, psychology, philosophy or the cultural

sciences. In this case, the questions raised are no longer exactly the same.

This distinction is becoming essential in current debates. Much of the misunderstanding stems from the fact that people are not always referring to the same thing when they use the word ‘astrology’. Some refer to a causal theory of astral influences; others speak of a symbolic system designed to support reflection on human experience. Clarifying these differences is an essential prerequisite for any serious dialogue.

For mindfulness astrology, this clarification represents the starting point for any reflection. It proposes neither a physical theory competing with astronomy, nor an attempt to replace scientific, explanations of the world. It fully acknowledges the established knowledge of contemporary science concerning the movements of celestial bodies. Its purpose is of a different nature. The birth chart is understood here as a symbolic mirror appearing in synchronicity with the psyche, without it being necessary to postulate a causal influence of the stars. This approach clearly distinguishes between the realm of physical causality, studied by the sciences, and that of symbolic meaning, which falls within the scope of philosophical reflection on consciousness, experience and meaning. It therefore does not claim to provide scientific validation of astrology, but rather to offer a coherent conceptual framework within which astrological symbols can be understood in ways other than as the effects of a physical action by the planets.

This development illustrates an important lesson from the history of ideas. The most fruitful debates do not always involve pitting two disciplines against one another, but

rather clarifying the questions each seeks to answer. A science is no less rigorous because it refuses to deal with symbols, just as philosophical reflection does not become scientific by borrowing the vocabulary of physics. Each field has its own methods, limitations and legitimacy.
As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that the true dialogue between astrology and science may only begin when each agrees to clearly define its own field of investigation. This demand for precision, inherited from several centuries of intellectual history, opens up the possibility of a more measured exchange, in which confusion gradually gives way to a better understanding of the different ways of questioning reality.
In the next episode, we shall explore another major question of the 21st century: why do astrological symbols continue to resonate with so many people? We shall see how research into myths, archetypes, narrative and the construction of meaning sheds light on the remarkable enduring nature of astrological language across civilisations.

Episode 3 Why do astrological symbols still speak to us?

After more than five millennia of history, one question remains surprisingly relevant today. Why do astrological symbols continue to resonate with so many people, even as our scientific understanding of the Universe has changed profoundly? This enduring appeal intrigues historians, psychologists, philosophers and religious scholars alike. For whilst cosmological models have evolved, images of the zodiac, the planets and celestial

cycles continue to occupy an important place in the human imagination.

Human beings naturally live amidst symbols. Languages, works of art, myths, stories, religions and cultural traditions all use images that transcend their mere outward appearance. A symbol cannot be reduced to a single definition. It opens up a space for interpretation in which everyone can recognise certain aspects of their own experience. It is undoubtedly this richness of meaning that explains their extraordinary longevity.

Anthropological research shows that all civilisations have developed grand narratives to organise their understanding of the world. Constellations, seasons, lunar cycles and the movements of the Sun have often served as a framework for these representations. Long before the advent of writing, the sky was already a vast canvas onto which societies projected their questions, fears, hopes and vision of the world order.

Myths play a similar role. Whether they are Greek, Mesopotamian, Egyptian or from other traditions, they depict fundamental situations of human experience: birth, death, separation, encounter, courage, power, transformation or the overcoming of trials. Astrological symbols have gradually drawn upon this vast narrative heritage.

In the 20th century, several researchers emphasised that symbols possess a remarkable capacity to organise inner experience. They do not necessarily describe objective realities; rather, they offer interpretative frameworks that enable us to make sense of what we experience. This function explains why very ancient symbolic systems

continue to resonate with people living in societies profoundly different from those in which they originated.
Astrology is part of this dynamic. The planets, signs, houses and aspects constitute a language composed of symbolic relationships. Their significance lies not solely in each symbol taken in isolation, but in the way they interrelate to form a coherent whole. Like any language, astrology has a grammar, a vocabulary and organisational rules that give rise to a multitude of possible meanings.
This richness also explains the diversity of contemporary interpretations. The same symbol can be interpreted in different ways depending on the astrological school, cultural context or philosophical approach adopted. The history of astrology shows that symbols have never ceased to be reinterpreted. Their enduring nature stems precisely from their ability to accompany the transformations of human thought.
Cognitive science is also interested in the role of narratives and symbolic models in the construction of meaning. It shows that human beings spontaneously organise their experience through narrative structures, categories and images that facilitate an understanding of the world. This research does not validate astrology as an explanatory theory, but it sheds light on certain general functions of symbolic systems in psychological life.
This perspective helps us better understand why astrological symbols continue to hold such fascination. They do not merely satisfy a curiosity about the future; they offer a language through which to explore the many dimensions of human experience. Their value therefore lies less in any claim to predict the future than in their

ability to encourage reflection on the self, on relationships and on the meaning of lived experiences.

For mindfulness astrology, this enduring nature of symbols has a specific explanation. Astrological symbols are not regarded as mere arbitrary cultural constructions, nor as the effects of a physical influence from the stars. They constitute a language that emerges in synchronicity with the psyche and reveals certain ways in which it functions. Their value does not lie in a truth imposed from without, but in their ability to make visible mechanisms of identification, psychological movements and the various pathways through which conscious presence can recognise itself behind the forms of experience. Thus, the symbol never confines; it opens up. It does not impose an identity; it invites us to see that which, within us, remains free from all identification.

History shows, finally, that symbols often outlive the theories associated with them. The cosmological models of antiquity have disappeared, medieval conceptions of the universe have been superseded, and scientific explanations have continued to evolve. Yet the great symbolic figures continue to inspire artists, philosophers, psychologists and researchers. This enduring presence reminds us that symbols fulfil a need for understanding that goes far beyond the theoretical frameworks in which they first emerged.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that the true power of astrology perhaps lies less in its answers than in its language. For millennia, its symbols have accompanied human questioning by offering a unique way of observing lived experience. Their history shows that

they continue to evolve alongside civilisations whilst retaining an astonishing ability to provoke inquiry.
In the next episode, we will address another major challenge of the 21st century: the astrologer's ethics. In an age where information circulates instantly and anyone can share their interpretations, we will see why responsibility, discernment and respect for the client's freedom are becoming more essential than ever.

Episode 4: The astrologer's ethics: guiding without restricting

In the 21st century, the key question is no longer simply how to interpret a birth chart, but also how to present it to the person seeking a reading. Astrological knowledge has developed considerably over the centuries; computer tools make calculations accessible to all, and information circulates instantly. In this new context, the astrologer's responsibility becomes more important than ever. The quality of a consultation depends as much on the way the symbols are conveyed as on their interpretation.
For much of its history, astrology was often associated with predicting future events. This role sometimes led practitioners to make definitive statements about a person's health, relationships, future successes or trials. Today, many astrologers consider that such an approach raises significant ethical questions. A statement presented as inevitable can profoundly influence a person's choices, fears or expectations.
This line of thinking echoes a principle widely shared across the helping professions: any interpretation has an effect on the person hearing it. Words can reassure and

encourage, but they can also cause anxiety, restrict or confine. The astrologer therefore does not work solely with symbols; they also work with the trust placed in them by the person seeking their advice.

Ethics thus requires us to distinguish between an open interpretation and a categorical assertion. A symbol can evoke different possibilities of experience without imposing a single interpretation. This caution does not reflect a weakness in the interpretation, but rather respect for the complexity of human life. The best astrological readings are often those that shed light without imposing, that offer possibilities without confining.

This responsibility becomes even more important in an age when consultations can take place remotely and social media disseminates thousands of pieces of astrological content every day. Snappy messages, generalisations or sensational predictions often reach a wide audience, but they also risk oversimplifying a symbolic language of great richness. The popularity of a message guarantees neither its accuracy nor its relevance.

Ethics also concern the relationship between the astrologer and their own knowledge. The history of astrology shows that interpretations have constantly evolved. This evolution calls for humility. No practitioner possesses a definitive understanding of the symbols. Each consultation also becomes an opportunity to learn, to question certain ideas and to deepen one's understanding.

Respect for confidentiality is another essential principle. As in many counselling professions, discussions between the client and the astrologer often concern very personal aspects of life. Trust requires that such information be treated with discretion and respect.

Ethics also entails recognising the limits of one's expertise. An astrologer is neither a doctor, nor a psychologist, nor a lawyer, nor a financial adviser, unless they also hold the relevant qualifications. A birth chart must never be used as a substitute for the specialist knowledge specific to these disciplines. Knowing how to refer a person to the appropriate professional when a situation requires it is an integral part of the practitioner's responsibility.

This consideration ties in with a deeper question: what is the true purpose of an astrological consultation? Is it to provide ready-made answers, or to help a person develop their own clarity of thought? Contemporary approaches increasingly favour the latter perspective. The birth chart then becomes a tool for dialogue, exploration and discernment rather than a verdict on one's existence.

In mindfulness astrology, this ethical dimension takes centre stage. If the birth chart is understood as a symbolic mirror of the psyche, appearing in synchronicity with experience, it can never be used to confine a person to a single identity or destiny. The astrologer's role is not to tell someone who they are, but to help them recognise the psyche's mechanisms of identification and the presence of Consciousness that illuminates them. This ‘ ’ approach naturally leads to a rejection of deterministic assertions, predictions presented as inevitable, and discourse likely to limit inner freedom. The guidance provided consists, above all, of fostering a quality of attention that enables the client to discover the significance of the symbols for themselves.

The history of astrology shows that techniques have evolved considerably over the centuries. Today, it appears

that the human qualities of the practitioner are just as important as their technical mastery. The accuracy of calculations is no substitute for listening, discernment or respect for another person's freedom.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that ethics is not merely a complement to contemporary astrology; it is one of its cornerstones. The more accessible the tools become, the greater the responsibility of those who interpret them. The future of astrology will undoubtedly depend as much on this ethical requirement as on the evolution of its body of knowledge.

In the next episode, we shall explore another major challenge of the 21st century: transmission. How can we teach a discipline that is over five thousand years old whilst respecting its history, contemporary knowledge and the diversity of current approaches?

Episode 5 Passing on astrology: between heritage and renewal

From the earliest observers of the sky in Mesopotamia to the online schools of the 21st century, transmission has always played an essential role in the history of astrology. Each generation has received a legacy, studied it, sometimes transformed it, and then passed it on in turn. The history we have explored throughout these chronicles shows that astrology has never been a static body of knowledge. It has constantly been enriched by astronomical discoveries, philosophical developments, cultural transformations and the new questions of each era. For a long time, the study of astrology relied mainly on the relationship between a master and their pupil. Knowledge

was passed on orally, and later through carefully copied manuscripts. Access to the texts remained limited, and the study could take many years. This slow pace often encouraged a gradual assimilation of the methods and in-depth reflection on their significance.

The invention of the printing press profoundly changed this situation. Books were distributed more widely and this knowledge became accessible to a growing number of readers. In the 20th century, schools of astrology, specialist journals and international conferences helped to structure the training of practitioners. Today, the internet provides instant access to a wealth of material that no previous generation could have imagined.

This abundance is a source of wealth, but it also presents a challenge. It is becoming easier to accumulate information than to build a coherent understanding. Astrological techniques are numerous and sometimes complex, and different schools often offer divergent interpretations. Teaching can therefore no longer consist solely of imparting knowledge; it must also teach students how to organise and compare this knowledge and to exercise genuine discernment.

Another difficulty arises from the proliferation of sources. Social media, videos, articles and software enable anyone to publish astrological content very easily. Whilst this freedom fosters creativity, it makes it all the more necessary to verify information, to be familiar with the history of the discipline and to respect the foundational texts. A tradition dating back several millennia deserves to be studied rigorously before being transformed.

Teaching astrology also requires distinguishing between historical facts, techniques, interpretations and

philosophical choices. The positions of the planets are a matter for astronomy. Calculation methods form part of a long technical tradition. Symbolic meanings are the result of a historical development. Finally, each school offers its own way of understanding this symbolic language. Confusing these different levels often leads to numerous misunderstandings.

Training an astrologer therefore involves less teaching them answers and more developing their capacity for observation, reflection and engagement with symbols. The history of astrology shows that the finest practitioners were almost always avid readers, keen observers and researchers capable of questioning their own ideas. Intellectual curiosity is an integral part of this discipline.

This requirement also leads to situating astrology within a broader body of knowledge. Philosophy, psychology, history, mythology, anthropology, astronomy and the history of religions each shed valuable light on the language of astrology. The more solid an astrologer's general knowledge, the greater the depth and nuance of their interpretation.

The 21st century offers an exceptional opportunity. Never before has it been so easy to study ancient texts, compare different traditions and exchange ideas with researchers from around the world. This international openness fosters a richer understanding of the history of astrology and enables us to move beyond the limitations inherent in any single school of thought.

For mindfulness astrology, passing on knowledge is not merely a matter of teaching interpretation techniques. It is, first and foremost, about conveying a way of looking at the birth chart. The tools inherited from tradition are

studied in detail, but they are always situated within an explicit philosophical framework: the absence of causal influence from the stars, synchronicity between the heavens and the psyche, the distinction between the psyche and Consciousness, and the recognition of the birth chart as a symbolic mirror of experience. The aim of the teaching is therefore not to produce interpreters who merely repeat meanings learnt by heart, but researchers capable of understanding symbols, questioning their own assumptions and guiding others with discernment. Training an astrologer is, above all, about cultivating a quality of presence and reflection.

This approach to teaching ultimately ties in with the entire history of astrology. Ever since the first observers of the heavens, each generation has had to learn to distinguish between what fell within the scope of the knowledge of its own era and what belonged to the great human questions that remain forever open. It is this capacity for adaptation that explains the remarkable continuity of this tradition.

As we bring this episode to a close, we realise that the future of astrology will depend largely on the quality of its transmission. Techniques will continue to evolve, astronomical discoveries will continue, and digital tools will continue to be refined. But nothing will ever replace a rigorous education capable of combining fidelity to the heritage, intellectual rigour and openness to new questions.

In the next episode, we shall address a question that has run through the entire history of astrology since its origins: does destiny really exist? We shall see how this question has been answered very differently across the ages and

how mindfulness astrology today offers a profoundly renewed interpretation of this concept.

Episode 6: Does destiny exist? A five-thousand-year-old question

Ever since the first observers of the heavens in Mesopotamia, one and the same question has run through the history of astrology: are the events of our lives already written down somewhere, or do we possess genuine freedom? Behind this question lies a much broader reflection on time, causality, responsibility and the very meaning of existence. Over the centuries, each era has offered its own answer, making destiny one of the most hotly debated themes in the entire history of astrology.

In the early Mesopotamian civilisations, celestial phenomena were often interpreted as omens foretelling future events. Eclipses, conjunctions or the appearance of certain stars were understood as signs addressed to rulers or to the people. The future thus seemed largely predetermined, even if certain rituals were sometimes performed in an attempt to avert unfavourable omens.

Greek philosophers gradually introduced more nuanced perspectives. The Stoics emphasised the idea of a universal cosmic order in which human beings participate. Other schools placed greater emphasis on freedom of the mind or on individual responsibility. Astrology thus became a forum for reflection where necessity, providence and freedom converged.

In the Middle Ages, the debates took on a theological dimension. How could the supposed influence of the stars be reconciled with human freedom and moral

responsibility? Christian, Jewish and Muslim thinkers developed a variety of responses. Many accepted that celestial configurations might incline rather than compel, thus leaving room for free will. This distinction was to have a lasting influence on the history of Western astrology.

The Renaissance brought fresh perspectives to the question. Advances in astronomy led several authors to question the true nature of the relationship between heaven and Earth. Some retained a deterministic view, whilst others sought to limit the scope of predictions or to favour a more symbolic understanding of celestial configurations.

The 20th century brought about a further shift. With the rise of psychology, many astrologers became less interested in events and more in the way individuals experience their lives. The natal chart gradually came to be seen as a representation of tendencies, potentials or psychological structures rather than a pre-written script. The question of destiny thus evolved into a reflection on how to navigate one's own experience.

Even today, the answers remain very diverse. Some schools of astrology retain a relatively deterministic view of celestial configurations. Others favour an approach based on choices, possibilities or processes of personal development. This diversity shows that the concept of destiny depends largely on the philosophical framework within which it is considered.

History, however, offers a valuable lesson. Representations of destiny evolve alongside societies' conceptions of the human being. When humans are viewed as subject to divine powers, destiny appears fixed. When they are understood as free agents, the scope for individual

choice expands. Astrology accompanies these transformations by gradually reinterpreting the meaning of the birth chart.

This development prompts us to distinguish between several issues that are often conflated. Does the birth chart describe inevitable events? Psychological dispositions? Potentialities? Symbols? Or does it constitute yet another form of language? Depending on the answer to this question, our entire understanding of astrology is profoundly altered.

In mindfulness astrology, the question of destiny receives a radically different answer from that which has long dominated the history of astrology. The birth chart is not a programme for a lifetime, nor a map of a future that has already been written. It is a symbolic mirror of the psyche, appearing in perfect synchronicity with the person's birth and experiences. The planets, signs, houses, aspects and transits do not determine anything; they reveal certain patterns of organisation within the psyche—its impulses, conditioning, mechanisms of identification, and the various ways in which it may veil or reveal conscious presence. True freedom, therefore, does not consist in altering a destiny inscribed in the stars, but in recognising that Consciousness, as a fundamental reality, always remains free from the psychological movements that arise within it. This shift entirely transforms the meaning of astrology. It is no longer a matter of discovering what is going to happen, but of recognising what is already present behind the experience.

This perspective also leads us to reinterpret the history of astrology in a new light. Centuries of debate on destiny appear as so many attempts to understand the relationship

between human beings and the cosmos. Each of these responses reflects the knowledge and philosophical conceptions of its time. Today, this history enables us to approach the question with greater perspective and precision.

As we bring this episode to a close, we discover that the real issue may not be whether destiny exists, but rather understanding what we mean by the word. For five millennia, this question has accompanied astrology without ever receiving a single definitive answer. It remains one of the most profound invitations to reflect on freedom, consciousness and the meaning of the human experience.

In the next episode, we will ask whether astrology still has a future. In this age of artificial intelligence, ongoing astronomical discoveries and the profound cultural shifts of the 21st century, we will explore how this tradition, stretching back thousands of years, might continue to evolve without losing what constitutes its very essence.

Episode 7: What future for astrology?

After more than five thousand years of history, astrology continues to evolve. Few intellectual traditions can boast such longevity. From the earliest Mesopotamian omens to contemporary software capable of calculating a birth chart in a matter of seconds, it has spanned civilisations, religions, scientific revolutions and cultural upheavals without ever ceasing to transform itself. This remarkable capacity for adaptation naturally leads to a question: what might its future hold?

The first answer is undoubtedly that this future will depend on its ability to engage with the knowledge of its time. Every major stage in its history has corresponded to a reinterpretation of its symbols. Greek astrology drew on ancient philosophy, Arabic astrology on advances in astronomy, the Renaissance on new observations of the heavens, and the modern ‘ ’ era on psychology and the human sciences. There is no indication that this process has now come to an end.

Advances in astronomy will probably continue to enrich our knowledge of the cosmos. New celestial objects will be discovered, observations will become ever more precise, and our understanding of the Universe will continue to evolve. As it has always done throughout its history, astrology will be called upon to reflect on how these discoveries may or may not enrich its own symbolic language.

Artificial intelligence is already transforming the way knowledge is produced, organised and disseminated. Software is capable of instantly calculating thousands of charts, comparing complex configurations and retrieving information from vast digital libraries. These tools will undoubtedly offer new possibilities for study, research and teaching. However, they will never replace philosophical reflection on the meaning of symbols, nor the quality of presence that characterises a genuine human encounter.

Exchanges between cultures will also continue to intensify. Western, Indian and Chinese traditions, along with other symbolic systems, are already engaging in greater dialogue than before. This openness will undoubtedly encourage new comparisons, but it will also

require great rigour in order to respect the distinct history of each tradition without artificially conflating them.

The future of astrology will also depend on its ability to clearly distinguish between the different levels of its discourse. Astronomical knowledge, calculation techniques, symbolic interpretations and philosophical choices belong to different realms. The more explicit these distinctions are, the more precise and fruitful the dialogue with other disciplines can become.

Another issue concerns the quality of knowledge transmission. In a world where anyone can instantly publish astrological content, ease of dissemination does not guarantee the quality of knowledge. Schools, researchers, authors and practitioners will likely have a vital role to play in preserving the intellectual, historical and ethical rigour that accompanies any discipline dating back several millennia.

This development also invites reflection on the very purpose of astrology. Does it seek primarily to predict events, to describe personality, to support a process of self-knowledge, or to offer a symbolic interpretation of the human experience? The answers to these questions will probably continue to diversify contemporary astrological schools of thought rather than unify them.

Finally, history teaches us a lesson in caution. The greatest transformations in astrology were rarely foreseen by those who lived through them. The discoveries of Hipparchus, Ptolemy, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, Jung and Alan Leo profoundly renewed the discipline, though their contemporaries were not always able to immediately grasp their significance. This history invites us to embrace the future with curiosity rather than with certainty.

For mindfulness astrology, the future does not lie in the endless accumulation of new techniques, nor in the search for scientific validation that would cause it to stray from its own domain. It lies in a deeper understanding of symbolic language in the light of contemporary knowledge of astronomy, psychology, philosophy and consciousness. The more accurately the sciences describe the mechanisms of the physical world, the more important it will become to clearly distinguish the realm of causality from that of meaning. Mindfulness astrology offers precisely this clarification. It does not seek to explain events through the stars, but to recognise in the celestial configuration a symbolic mirror appearing in synchronicity with the psyche. Its future will therefore depend less on new technical discoveries than on its ability to remain faithful to this philosophical coherence whilst remaining open to dialogue with new knowledge.

Looking back over these five millennia of history, one constant emerges. The tools, cosmological models and interpretations have changed profoundly, but the fundamental question has remained the same: how can we understand the relationship between human experience and the heavens? It is probably this ever-renewed question that will continue to keep astrology alive in the years to come.

As we bring this episode to a close, we realise that the future of astrology is not set in stone. Like any living tradition, it will depend on the men and women who continue to study it with rigour, discernment and openness. Its history shows that its true strength has never lain in immutability, but in its ability to reinvent itself without losing sight of its heritage.

In the next episode, we shall take an even broader view. Having explored its possible future, we shall ask ourselves what the entire history of astrology ultimately teaches us about human beings themselves, about their relationship with the cosmos, and about that quest for meaning which has run through all civilisations since the dawn of time.

Episode 8: What five thousand years of astrology teach us about human beings

Having journeyed through more than five millennia of history, one thing gradually becomes clear. The history of astrology is certainly that of a discipline devoted to the heavens, but it is just as much the story of humankind itself. In every age, men and women have looked up at the stars not only to understand the movements of the celestial bodies, but also to try to answer the great questions of their existence. Behind every astrological theory lies a particular way of conceiving of human beings, the world and their relationship.

The earliest Mesopotamian observers sought omens concerning the future of kingdoms in celestial phenomena. The Greeks discovered in them a cosmic order capable of shedding light on the human condition. Arab scholars developed methods of remarkable precision. Medieval thinkers pondered the relationship between celestial influences, free will and providence. Renaissance humanists compared ancient traditions with new astronomical discoveries. Modern al authors gradually shifted their focus towards psychology, personality and self-knowledge. Each of these stages reflects the evolution of societies as much as that of astrology itself.

This history also reveals that astrological symbols have never been entirely fixed. Their interpretation has constantly evolved in line with the knowledge available. The same planets, the same signs and the same houses have been interpreted in different ways depending on culture, philosophy and historical period. This capacity for evolution undoubtedly explains the remarkable continuity of astrology, despite the profound transformations in our understanding of the cosmos.

Another lesson emerges with great clarity. The major turning points in the history of astrology almost always coincide with shifts in worldview. When astronomical models evolve, when philosophy raises new questions, or when psychology introduces new concepts, astrology is prompted to reinterpret its own language. Its history is therefore not that of an isolated field of knowledge, but one of ongoing dialogue with other forms of knowledge.

By observing this long evolution, we also discover that human beings never cease to seek meaning. Tools change, theories come and go, civilisations disappear and others emerge, but the same question remains: how can we understand our place in the Universe? This quest for meaning cuts across all cultures. It explains why the heavens continue to fascinate us even as our scientific knowledge of the Universe has never been more extensive. Advances in astronomy have not made this question disappear; they have simply shifted its focus. Today, we know the approximate age of the Universe, how stars are born, about distant galaxies and a multitude of phenomena of which our ancestors had no inkling. Yet these discoveries do not directly answer questions concerning the meaning of human experience, consciousness,

freedom or how we should live our lives. They belong to a different realm of knowledge.

The history of astrology also shows that the answers given to these great questions always reflect the philosophical assumptions of their time. When a civilisation conceives of the world as entirely determined, its astrology tends to become fatalistic. When it emphasises psychology or individual freedom, its interpretation of the birth chart evolves in the same direction. The symbols remain, but their interpretation changes with the worldview that frames them.

This observation calls for great caution. No astrological interpretation exists independently of the philosophical framework that gives it meaning. The entire history of astrology can thus be read as a succession of reinterpretations, in which each generation attempts to make the symbols consistent with the knowledge at its disposal. Understanding this evolution is perhaps one of the most important keys to approaching contemporary astrology.

For mindfulness astrology, this historical reinterpretation leads to a decisive shift. The ultimate object of astrology is no longer the sky itself, nor even the psyche' d in isolation, but the recognition of the symbolic relationship that emerges between the celestial configuration and conscious experience. The five millennia we have just surveyed reveal a slow maturation in which deterministic interpretations have gradually given way to a deeper understanding of the birth chart. Mindfulness astrology continues this movement by clearly distinguishing the psyche from Consciousness and by understanding the birth chart as the symbolic mirror of the ways in which the

psyche manifests or veils this fundamental presence. Thus, the true lesson of history is perhaps not that the stars speak of us, but that they invite us, through their symbolic language, to recognise that which, within us, remains free from all personal history.

This perspective also sheds light on the enduring nature of astrology. Had it been based solely on a particular cosmological model, it would probably have disappeared along with it. The reason it has endured for so many centuries is that it addresses a question deeper than successive theories: that of the relationship between human beings, the world and the mystery of existence. Its history is thus less that of a static system than that of an unceasing quest for understanding.

As we bring this episode to a close, we realise that the five thousand years of astrology's history ultimately tell a single story: that of humanity seeking to understand itself by gazing at the sky. The constellations, planets and celestial cycles thus become the silent witnesses to a quest that transcends all civilis s and continues today in new forms.

In the next episode, we shall look back over this entire historical journey to identify its key stages and main lessons. This will be an opportunity to take one last overview before concluding this series with a reflection on what astrology might be today – an astrology that is fully aware of its history, its limitations and its purpose.

Episode 9: The Key Lessons from Five Thousand Years of History

After ninety-nine episodes devoted to the history of astrology, it is time to take a step back and look at the bigger picture one last time. From the earliest observers of the sky in Mesopotamia to contemporary reflections on consciousness, we have journeyed through more than five millennia of an exceptional intellectual adventure. Rarely has a tradition undergone so many transformations whilst maintaining such continuity. This enduring nature invites us to identify the key lessons that this long history leaves us with today.

The first is that astrology has never stood still. In every era, it has evolved. Mesopotamian priests observed omens intended for rulers. The Greeks developed the natal chart. Arab scholars perfected astronomical calculations. Medieval thinkers explored the relationship between the stars and human freedom. The Renaissance revolutionised our understanding of the cosmos. The 20th century introduced psychology and personal development. Each period has left its mark on astrological language.

The second lesson is that astrology has always engaged in dialogue with other forms of knowledge. Its history is inseparable from that of astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, medicine, theology, psychology and, more recently, the humanities. Far from evolving in isolation, it has continually adapted to the discoveries and questions of its time.

The third lesson concerns the symbols themselves. Their remarkable longevity shows that they cannot be reduced to the cosmological models from which they originated.

Representations of the Universe have changed profoundly, yet the great symbolic figures continue to inform reflection on the human experience. This enduring nature suggests that their function extends far beyond the historical context of their emergence.

A fourth lesson emerges with great clarity: the debates within astrology often concern not so much the techniques as the philosophical concepts underpinning them. The same planets, the same signs, the same houses or the same aspects can be interpreted very differently depending on whether one adopts a deterministic, psychological, spiritual or symbolic perspective. Understanding astrology therefore always requires an understanding of the framework of thought within which it is interpreted.

History also shows that periods of crisis have often been the most fruitful. Criticism of astrology by philosophers, astronomers or scientific s has not always led to its decline. It has frequently forced the discipline to clarify its concepts, to abandon certain explanations that had become inadequate, and to develop new ways of understanding the birth chart. Major periods of questioning have often paved the way for the most profound renewals.

Another lesson concerns the relationship between observation and interpretation. Advances in astronomy have constantly improved our knowledge of the heavens. Symbolic interpretation, on the other hand, has never ceased to evolve. This distinction is essential. Astronomical data can be established with a very high degree of precision; their meaning, however, always depends on a process of understanding that belongs to a different realm. Confusing these two levels has often been the source of numerous misunderstandings.

History also shows that the greatest astrologers were rarely mere repeaters of tradition. Ptolemy, Albumasar, Kepler, Alan Leo and Dane Rudhyar all reinterpreted the legacy they inherited in the light of the knowledge of their own times. Their fidelity did not consist in reproducing the past identically, but in preserving its essence whilst renewing it. This approach remains a source of inspiration for all contemporary research.

Another constant runs through these five millennia: the quest for meaning. Societies have changed, languages have evolved, empires have vanished, but the fundamental questions have remained remarkably similar. Who are we? What is our place in the world? Are we free? Why do certain experiences transform us so profoundly? Astrology has accompanied these questions without ever claiming to resolve them definitively.

For mindfulness astrology, this entire history leads to a specific conclusion. The centuries that have passed invite us to clearly distinguish three levels. The first is that of astronomy, which describes the physical reality of the heavens with remarkable precision. The second is that of the psyche, whose birth chart serves as a symbolic mirror appearing in synchrony with experience. The third is that of Consciousness itself, a fundamental reality that is neither born nor transformed, and is not confined to any astrological configuration. This distinction enables us to fully embrace the achievements of modern science, to recognise the richness of the symbolic language developed over the centuries, and to avoid the confusion that has often accompanied the history of astrology. The true legacy of these five millennia is therefore not a definitive

theory of destiny, but an invitation to deepen our understanding of conscious experience.

Looking back over this long journey, one idea finally becomes clear. The history of astrology is not one of a linear accumulation of knowledge. It is more like a vast conversation between generations. Each era poses new questions to the ancient symbols, and these respond differently depending on the perspective from which they are viewed. It is undoubtedly this capacity for dialogue that explains their astonishing vitality.

As we bring this penultimate episode to a close, we realise that astrology's most precious legacy is perhaps not a set of techniques, but a way of questioning existence through the language of the heavens. This unbroken dialogue between observation, symbol and reflection has accompanied humanity for over five thousand years and continues to nourish the search for meaning today.

In the final episode of this series, we shall conclude this historical journey by returning to its starting point. Having travelled through civilisations, met the great astrologers and traced the evolution of ideas, we shall ask ourselves what 'reading the heavens' really means today and how mindfulness astrology proposes to profoundly renew our understanding of it.

Episode 10 Looking Up at the Sky

We have now reached the end of this long journey that began over five thousand years ago, when a few observers in Mesopotamia looked up at the sky in an attempt to understand the mysterious movements of the stars. Since that first night, we have journeyed through the great

civilisations of antiquity, the Greek philosophical schools, the observatories of the Arab world, medieval universities, the upheavals of the Renaissance, the scientific revolutions, philosophical debates, psychological revivals and contemporary reflections. Over the course of these one hundred and twenty columns, a single story has gradually emerged: that of a humanity which has never ceased to question the heavens in order to better understand its own existence.

We have encountered priests, astronomers, philosophers, doctors, mathematicians, poets, psychologists and astrologers. Some sought to predict events, others to understand the laws of the Universe, and still others to explore the depths of the human psyche. All of them, despite their differences, shared the same conviction: the sky is worth observing, not only because it reveals something about the cosmos, but also because it invites human beings to reflect on themselves.

Throughout this history, cosmological models have changed profoundly. The Earth is no longer at the centre of the Universe. The celestial spheres have vanished. The planets have been revealed to be worlds. Galaxies have replaced the celestial vaults of antiquity. Telescopes have revealed billions of stars, whilst space probes have explored the Solar System. Yet none of these discoveries has diminished our sense of wonder at the sky. Quite the contrary: the vaster the Universe has become, the more it has raised new questions.

We have also seen how much astrological interpretations have evolved. Omens intended for kings have given way to individual themes. For some authors, celestial influences have given way to reflections on symbols,

psychology or synchronicity. Techniques have been refined, methods have diversified and philosophies have multiplied. This evolution shows that a tradition remains alive when it is willing to reinterpret its own heritage without compromising its demand for coherence.

Another discovery accompanies this journey. The history of astrology ultimately speaks as much of human beings as it does of the stars. In every era, representations of the heavens have reflected the great questions that societies asked themselves about freedom, responsibility, destiny, consciousness or the meaning of existence. By observing the transformations of astrology, we have also observed the transformations of human thought.

Modern science has profoundly enriched this history. Today, it offers us an extraordinarily precise understanding of celestial movements, the birth of stars, the evolution of galaxies and the structure of the Universe. This knowledge constitutes a precious asset that there is no justification for ignoring. Astronomy and physics shed light on the workings of the cosmos with a rigour that commands admiration. Their development compels all contemporary astrological reflection to define its own domain and to clearly distinguish the realm of physical causes from that of symbolic meanings.

This distinction is undoubtedly one of the key lessons of this entire journey. When astrology claims to explain human phenomena through the influence of the stars, it enters the realm of the natural sciences. When, on the contrary, it recognises that the birth chart belongs to the language of symbols, it opens up a different space for reflection, where the essential question is no longer what acts upon us, but what our way of experiencing life

reveals. This shift does not diminish astrology; it enables it to rediscover a new coherence in dialogue with contemporary knowledge.

This entire history also leads to a deeper reflection on consciousness. From the earliest omens to the most recent approaches, a slow evolution becomes apparent. Gradually, the focus shifts from the external world towards the experience itself. This shift not only leads to a better understanding of the mechanisms of the psyche; it also invites us to recognise what, in any experience, remains present prior to any interpretation, emotion or thought. It is in this direction that several contemporary schools of thought are now pursuing their research, each using its own philosophical language.

Mindfulness astrology fits naturally into this historical continuum whilst offering an original formulation. It embraces the immense legacy built up over the centuries: the observations of the ancients, astronomical rigour, symbolic elaborations, contributions from psychology and the critical demands of modern thought. But it brings these elements together around a few simple principles: the stars do not exert a causal influence on human beings; the birth chart constitutes a symbolic mirror appearing in synchronicity with the psyche; the psyche is a manifestation of Consciousness and not its origin; finally, true freedom lies not in altering one's destiny, but in recognising that conscious presence which illuminates all the movements of experience without ever being limited by them. Thus, the entire history of astrology appears less as a quest for power over the future than as a slow maturation leading to a deeper understanding of ourselves.

As we close these chronicles, one final image remains: that of a human being looking up at the sky, just as countless generations before him have done. The constellations have been given different names by different peoples, theories have evolved, and civilisations have come and gone, but this gesture has remained the same. To look up at the stars is, perhaps above all, to accept that our existence is part of a mystery that transcends us, whilst constantly inviting us to get to know ourselves better.

Our historical journey ends here, but the exploration itself never ends. Every birth chart, every observation of the sky, every human encounter and every moment of presence offers a new opportunity to delve deeper into this question that has run through the entire history of astrology since its origins: not what the stars do to us, but what they invite us to discover about ourselves. It is perhaps here, even more so than in calculations or interpretations, that the true legacy of five thousand years of observing the heavens lies.

Conclusion

As we close this book, we complete a journey that began long before the invention of writing, in an age when the first human beings were already gazing at the night sky in wonder. More than five millennia have passed since those earliest observations up to the most contemporary reflections. Civilisations have come and gone, languages have changed, empires have risen and fallen, religions have evolved, and science has revolutionised our understanding of the Universe. Yet one thing has remained surprisingly constant: the deeply human need to seek meaning by looking up at the sky.

Throughout these chronicles, we have discovered that the history of astrology is far more complex than common preconceptions would suggest. It cannot be reduced either to a succession of ancient beliefs or to a mere technique of interpretation. It constitutes one of humanity's longest-running intellectual adventures. Few disciplines can claim to have accompanied so many civilisations, engaged with so many fields of knowledge and weathered so many cultural revolutions without ever disappearing.

We have also seen that this history is not that of a static tradition. Astrology has been constantly transforming itself. Cosmological models have changed, methods have evolved, interpretations have been revised, astronomical discoveries have broadened our view of the sky, and philosophies have renewed our understanding of human beings. Each era has reinterpreted astrological symbols in the light of its own knowledge. This capacity for evolution undoubtedly explains the remarkable longevity of this tradition.

One of the key lessons of this journey lies precisely in this constant evolution. History shows that symbols often outlive the theories that explained them. The celestial spheres have vanished, the Earth no longer occupies the centre of the Universe, and scientific knowledge has profoundly transformed our understanding of the cosmos. Yet the great symbolic figures of the zodiac, the planets and the celestial cycles continue to challenge human experience. Their enduring presence invites us not so much to repeat the interpretations of the past as to understand why these symbols continue to resonate in our own time.

This line of thought naturally leads us to distinguish between two spheres that were long conflated. The first is that of physical causes, which is admirably addressed by astronomy, physics and the other natural sciences. The second is that of meaning, symbolism and lived experience. The history of astrology shows that many controversies have arisen from the difficulty in distinguishing between these two spheres. Advances in contemporary science do not diminish the richness of symbols; they simply invite us to clarify their status and function.

This clarification opens up a new perspective. If the birth chart is no longer understood as the result of an influence exerted by the stars, it can be approached differently: as a symbolic representation appearing in synchronicity with human experience. This shift does not seek to restore ancient, un d conceptions, nor to oppose scientific knowledge. On the contrary, it invites us to fully embrace the achievements of astronomy whilst recognising that

symbolic language belongs to a different order of understanding.

It is within this framework that mindfulness astrology is situated. Far from breaking with the history we have just explored, it continues the momentum of that history. It embraces the immense legacy left by the generations that came before us, whilst offering a renewed interpretation of the birth chart. The birth chart is no longer viewed as revealing an imposed destiny, but as a symbolic mirror of the psyche, appearing in perfect synchrony with the individual's experience. Symbols are no longer intended to confine the individual to an identity, a mission or a fate; they become invitations to recognise the workings of the psyche and to discover the freedom that lies in mindful presence.

This reinterpretation does not claim to be the definitive culmination of the history of astrology. On the contrary, history teaches us that no era has the final say. Each generation receives a legacy, examines it, enriches it and, in turn, passes it on. Astrology will certainly continue to evolve, as it always has, in response to astronomical discoveries, the human sciences, philosophy and the new questions that will arise in the future.

Perhaps this is the most beautiful lesson to be learnt from these five thousand years of history. The stars have never ceased to be the same; it is our perspective that has changed. In every age, human beings have projected their knowledge, their hopes, their fears, their beliefs and their deepest questions onto the sky. By studying the history of astrology, we ultimately discover not so much the evolution of the stars as that of our own consciousness.

What if this long journey taught us, above all, to see things differently?
To look at the sky, not to seek certainties there, but to rediscover a sense of wonder. To look at the symbols, not so that they tell us who we are, but so that they help us observe the movements of our psyche with greater clarity. To look at our existence, not as a destiny written in advance, but as a living experience in which every moment can become an opportunity for inner realisation.
From the earliest observers on the plains of Mesopotamia to today's researchers, the sky has never ceased to inspire humanity. It will probably continue to do so for as long as men and women feel the need to understand their place in the Universe.
The historical journey ends here.
But the true journey – that of self-knowledge, mindful presence and wonder at the mystery of existence – may only just be beginning.

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The Chronicles of Astrology

A journey through five millennia of history

When the first human beings looked up at the sky, they were not merely observing the stars. They were seeking to understand their place in the Universe.

From Mesopotamia to modern observatories, from Egyptian temples to Greek philosophers, from Arab astronomers to the Renaissance, from scientific revolutions to contemporary psychology, this sweeping account traces more than five thousand years of an extraordinary intellectual adventure. Through 120 vivid accounts, Jérôme Zenastral takes us on a journey to meet the men and women who have shaped the history of astrology, revealing how this discipline has continually evolved in step with astronomical discoveries, philosophical developments and major shifts in human thought.

Accessible, well-researched and rich in anecdotes, this book shows that the history of astrology is also the story of how we look at the sky, understand the world and reflect on ourselves.

Far more than a history of astrology, this book is a history of the human quest for meaning, which naturally leads the reader towards a renewed understanding of the symbolic language of the birth chart from the perspective of mindfulness astrology.